FREE LEAGUE

Symbaroum

Core Rulebook

"In the ruins of Symbaroum a dream sight revealed
a well, a cauldron, a sinkhole.

Out of its depth a blightling came sidling,
filth forged in flesh, cruelty carved in bone,
a decoction of the World Serpent's marrow.

The blight beast ogled me hungrily
and in its burning eyes I saw the death of all."

The Dream Continues

LITTLE MORE THAN three years after the first printing of the English Core Rulebook, we are now preparing a fourth printrun. And "we" are no longer Järnringen; instead "we" refers to a bigger collective of game makers named *Free League Publishing*. The old Symbaroum team is intact, including writers Mattias Johnsson Haake and Mattias Lilja along with the artist Martin Grip. But since the summer of 2018 all new products will have felt the touch of four additional designers, known for games like *Forbidden Lands, Tales from the Loop, Mutant: Year Zero* and, not to forget, *Coriolis* – the arabesque space opera originally created by Järnringen, then later remodeled by Free League and introduced to an international audience.

The first product to be fully developed under the Free League banner is *Symbar – Mother of Darkness*, episode IV in the *Throne of Thorns*. This episode is the very turning point of the adventure chronicle, just like the merger will prove to be a turning point for the game itself – with bigger resources and better support, we will surely be able to pour even more love and thought into the design of upcoming products. So even if the outcome of the adventure chronicle's defining moment is undecided, we are wholeheartedly confident that the future of Symbaroum is blessed by Queen Korinthia and the Sun God Prios alike.

Happy gaming!
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An extra heartfelt thanks to Symbaroum's ten Champions of Prios, for confidence shown and for your willingness to support our international endeavour. We are honored to have you on our side.

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Symbaroum is waiting ...

... FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS! The book in your hands is more than mere paper and ink. It is the gateway to another world; a world where you will get to explore the vast Forest of Davokar in the hunt for treasures, insights and fame; where you may visit one of the eleven barbarian clans to trade or to plunder their treasuries; where you can establish a base of power among princes, guilds or rebellious refugees in the capital city of Yndaros; where you can fight for the honor of Queen Korinthia or ally yourselves with the ancient guardians of the forest. Whichever path you choose to walk, unforgettable adventures are waiting behind every crest and bend.

THE CORE RULEBOOK of Symbaroum consists of three main sections – the Game World, the Player's Guide and the Game Master's Guide – containing all you need to know to enter this world. The first section offers an introductory depiction of the realm of Ambria and the forest of Davokar. Among other topics it deals with the history, geography and peoples of the region, as well as the conflicts within and between different groups.

The Player's Guide covers all you need in order to create a Player Character (PC): the player's avatar or alter ego in the game world. It describes how to determine what race the PC belongs to, what attributes and abilities it has, and what weapons and equipment it carries. The guide also covers the game rules that the player should know about – primarily the ones dealing with situations where the PC gets into a fight or is facing other kinds of problems or challenges.

The final section of the book is exclusively meant for the person in your gaming group who shoulders the role of Game Master (GM). What that role entails is described in the upcoming pages, but the content of the section gives a clue: aside from a thorough walkthrough of the game rules it contains a passage that deals with how to create adventures as well as a comprehensive chapter listing beasts, creatures and adversaries that the PCs may encounter during those adventures.

You who are already knowledgeable about how roleplaying games operate can probably skip the next two pages, but we hope that all beginners will find their introduction to what a roleplaying game is to be useful. Whatever category you may belong to, you are of course most welcome to walk with us through the halls of Davokar, among the ruins of ancient Symbaroum. We firmly believe that you and your friends will find what you are looking for. And more ...

Narrative Tutorial

On page 237, as part of the introductory adventure, there is a narrative tutorial that describes how the communication between a player and the Game Master may flow while Symbaroum is played. It is recommended that the GM reads it first and that you who are to be players refrain from reading it until you have played through the adventure.

Roleplaying Game?

One can say that a roleplaying game consists of two main ingredients: on the one hand, a fantasy world full of places to visit and creatures to meet; on the other hand, rules that dictate what is possible to do in that world and determines the outcome of what happens.

Roleplaying games are played in a group, together with friends, and the goal is primarily to have fun. You do not compete with each other; instead you share a common adventure through the eyes of your player characters. The individual who shoulders the Game Master's responsibility does not have a PC of his own. His or her task is to manage the game, for instance by describing the world and putting the PCs to the test with problems and challenges. But the common story, or more accurately, the shared adventure, is something which the players and GM create together.

The Game World

The fantasy world where the player characters live both resembles and differs from our own. What differs depends on which roleplaying game you play, but regarding the particular world of Symbaroum you will for instance face laws of nature making magic and blessings real; creatures like elves, trolls and lindworms; a level of development which in most aspects resembles that of late medieval Europe; and societies with steep hierarchies where the weak and the sick have a hard time surviving. The first section of this book contains an in-depth description of the game world.

Other similarities between the worlds are that Symbaroum's world, like our own, has been shaped by a long history; that it has nature, cities and villages; and not least that it is inhabited by individuals who firmly believe that the world around them is real and that their actions have real consequences. Sure, it is a fantasy world, but that is not something which the player characters and its other inhabitants are aware of.

You will find the Character Sheet at the back of this book and you are free to copy, print, and distribute it as much as you like.

Freedom and Immersion

Just as an encyclopedia or a post on the internet can never provide you with a comprehensive description of Sweden or the US, the kingdom of Ambria and the forest of Davokar contain a multitude of people, places and phenomena which do not fit in this book. What is written herein must be understood as a mere point of departure for the adventures you will share with your friends.

If you want to visit a place or a person that is mentioned in this book without being thoroughly described, it is up to you to "discover", thereby describing, it together. And remember that even if future modules added to this game will expand on the description of Ambria and Davokar, you always have the freedom to travel wherever you want in the game world – including places outside the boundaries of the map.

Tips & Guidance

More information on how roleplaying games operate can be found on various online forums and sites. On the forums you can also post questions to more experienced gamers – questions touching on everything from game rules to the design of adventures.

Free League's own forum can be found by way of our homepage at frialigan.se/en/startpage. You are most welcome to visit us there!

Players

WHEN PLAYING a roleplaying game each participant (except the Game Master) has his or her own player character, through which he or she experiences and interacts with the game world. The player decides what the PC says and does, and rolls dice to determine if his or her character succeeds in what it attempts to do.

THE PLAYER CHARACTER

When creating a PC you do so guided by the rules in the Player's Guide and write down the outcome of your decisions on the character sheet. The character sheet contains the PC's name, what skills it has, what goals it has, what equipment it carries and so on. When the player character learns something, earns a reward, acquires new equipment or alters its ambitions, the player takes out his or her eraser and pencil and makes the required changes on the character sheet.

When it comes to the specific game of Symbaroum the players' characters form a unified group where everyone has different but equally strong reasons for wanting to work together. Conflicts between the PCs may occur but should not be allowed to get too serious.

The ruleset of Symbaroum is built for collaboration and the principle of consensus is assumed to prevail between players, as well as between players and Game Master. There are other roleplaying games that focus more on disagreements between players or that portray the GM as an opponent to the players. Symbaroum is not such a game; at least, it is not designed to be.

DICE ROLLS

When playing Symbaroum all dice rolls are managed by the players, unlike other games where the Game Master also makes some rolls. To see if a PC is successful or fails when attempting to perform an action the player rolls a twenty-sided die (1D20).

In order for the PC to succeed the die must land on a number which is equal to or lower than the value specified by the Game Master – a value related to one of the PC's basic Attributes and sometimes also modified by other circumstances. Effect tests, meaning rolls to, for example, determine how much damage is dealt with a weapon or how much a person is healed by a mystical power, are rolled with other dice. These are called D4, D6, D8, D10 or D12 depending on how many sides they have.

Symbaroum's Dice Set

Four-sided (D4)

Six-sided (D6)

Eight-sided (D8)

Ten-sided (D10)

Twelve-sided (D12)

Twenty-sided (D20)

Game Master

SIMPLY PUT, the Game Master is the one who makes the world come alive for the players and who challenges the player characters as they strive for their goals. As something like a real-time director the GM must be prepared to improvise if the PCs do something unexpected, at other times to help the players on their way – all with the goal that their mutual story should be as thrilling and enjoyable as possible.

Being a Game Master means spending some time on preparations but it is indeed a labor of love, not least when after a session you are rewarded with positive comments from the players.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The individuals and creatures encountered by the players in the game world are called non-player characters (NPCs) and are accordingly portrayed by the GM. The NPC may be anything from a jovial servant at an inn to a howling beast in Davokar.

As previously stated, the Game Master does not have to perform any die rolls to see if the NPCs are successful or not. They are instead characterized by fixed values used to modify rolls made by the players. In other words: instead of rolling dice, the GM may focus on describing what happens in the game world and on deciding how different NPCs respond and verbally react to the actions of the player characters.

ADVENTURES

The players have a great impact on what happens during a gaming session, but the GM has a special responsibility for the story. It is chiefly the GM who makes preparations before the session, either by creating an adventure of his or her own or by studying and planning for a published adventure created by someone else (for instance by us at Free League).

In the last section of this book the GM is offered advice for creating two sorts of adventures: the Classical type and the Adventure Landscape. However, there are no fixed rules for how to create adventures and there is nothing that states that the Game Master has to spend lots of hours on large-scale preparations. Sometimes it can be at least as much fun just gathering around the table, starting to play and seeing what happens. For however one may regard roleplaying games in general you should never forget that they are primarily meant to be an entertaining, thrilling and unifying experience for all!

IKE A STEEL-CLAD SHIP in a thundering storm, she cut through the waves of darkness and dread. I was there to bear witness; I am one of few who stood in awe as the first light of dawn got caught in her armor, transforming our young Queen into a mounted, sword-wielding sun – Korinthia Nightbane, our sovereign, slayer of the dark.

The blood that was spilt, the lives that were lost, the tears that keep falling from red-rimmed eyes; the skies filled with ash, the soils turned to dust, the rivers transformed into muddy trenches. Such is the price we had to pay, for the Dark Lords' betrayal, but also for the hardships that finally led us here, to the Promised Land.

Strengthened and enlightened, we begin again, the children of Alberetor matured into the mothers of Ambria. The sorrow that blackens our hearts will be delivered in tears of hope and joy, not of grief and despair. We shall harvest the fruits of earth and forests, we shall harness the force of rivers and mountains, we will rise higher than ever before. To the pleasure of Prios we shall ascend to a place where there are no shadows, where darkness is no more. Because we are the people of Korinthia Nightbane and we will never be vanquished!"

Excerpt from Herakleo Attio's New Year's speech, the Triumph Plaza, Yndaros

BOOK 1:

THE WORLD OF SYMBAROUM

Welcome to Symbaroum!

OR, TO BE PRECISE, welcome to the region that in ancient times was ruled by the civilization of Symbaroum – an empire that by all accounts was advanced in the areas of architecture, spirituality, magical schooling and the arts; a culture that without doubt suffered a both rapid and brutal downfall.

THIS SECTION OF THE BOOK contains an overview of the region where the roleplaying game Symbaroum is set, a region including the kingdom of Ambria, the vast forest of Davokar, the naked lowlands west of the woods and the mountain ranges marking its southern and eastern borders. What may be found outside this region will become the topic of future modules, although some information has been included here – not least about Alberetor, the land south of the Titans which the Ambrian people have been forced to abandon.

The reason for zooming in on a limited geographical area is that we are aiming for a presentation which is comprehensive rather than shallow, nuanced rather than sweeping. That being said, you will still find blanks and gaps in the text, topics we have been forced to exclude because of space limitations. But we hope and trust that the included material will prove to be enough for you to fill in the blanks yourself.

This opening chapter covers the history, geography and population of the setting, while Chapter 2 presents its most powerful factions. After that comes a chapter that introduces what arguably can be described as the heart of the game world, the forest of Davokar, followed by three chapters describing its most important population centers: the town of Thistle Hold, Ambria's capital Yndaros and the forest plateau Karvosti where the High Chieftain of the barbarian clans reside. Thistle Hold is the main base of Ambria's explorers and fortune-hunters and is given a more detailed account, while the latter are portrayed in broader strokes pending more exhaustive presentations in upcoming books.

With the texts, images and maps of this section we hope that you will feel welcomed to the setting of Symbaroum. We would also like to invite you to contribute to its expansion. It is when this book reaches its readers that Ambria and Davokar truly

begin to live and breathe, and we hope that you are willing to share your ideas, thoughts and creations with the Symbaroum community. In this way, the improvement and development of the setting can become our joint venture!

The Return of the Queen

THE GREAT WAR, the hungry hordes of the Dark Lords – a nightmare that lasted for two decades and which left little to hearten those who finally woke up. Instead they had all the reasons to grieve: tens of thousands had died; the maimed and broken were beyond count; the land was ravaged by death magic; there was famine and infertility. And even though the young Queen had been rescued from the claws of the enemy, she had returned a shadow of her former self, with a lifeless mask covering her once radiant sunshine smile.

Twenty-one years have passed since the Dark Lords were vanquished and the Queen realized that her realm was dying. She was forced to lead her people to safer grounds, that much was evident. And before long she was able to identify where to start anew. North of the mountain range called the Titans lay the fertile soils which according to legend were the ancestral home of her people. The time had come for Korinthia to claim her birthright.

During the past couple of centuries the region up north had been controlled by warring, barbarian clans and before that by the prosperous city-state of Lindaros. According to legend, Lindaros suffered the wrath of celestial powers, causing a most infectious bleeder's disease to wipe out its entire population. This occurred about two hundred years ago, after which it took more than a century before the nomadic clans of the region dared approach the contaminated ruins.

No more than a couple of months after the decisive battle against the Dark Lords, Korinthia's troops reached the region in the north. At Lindaros they encountered a small barbarian settlement, established by the clan Kadiz that had been evicted from its territory in Davokar fifty years earlier. After a siege that lasted only three days the barbarian chieftain bowed before the superior power and the work of rebuilding Lindaros could commence – a task that mainly was carried out by thousands of prisoners of war and as many so-called volunteers, men and women who were on the run from already dead regions in old Alberetor.

The Queen did not join the refugees until seven years after the war's end. When she did, she declared that her new realm would be called Ambria, "the shining", and the increasingly well-organized capital was to be named Yndaros in honor of Korinthia's father, the hero king Ynedar. Three years later the Queen's armies also managed to overwhelm the barbarian warlord Haloban and his clan warriors – a triumph giving Korinthia and her people the opportunity to start exploring and harvesting the ample riches of Davokar Forest.

Much has happened over a short period of time, so there has been no room for subtleties. Disobedient barbarians have been killed, banished or imprisoned by Korinthia's experienced and well-equipped soldiers; the obedient ones have been used for labor under slave-like conditions. The latter also holds true for many of Korinthia's own subjects, namely all those who came from the south without personal riches or sought-after skills. If anyone bothered to keep count of how many people have died in the process of building Ambria the final score would be in the thousands. But no one does. To those who are alive nothing counts but the remarkable result. Although the restoration of Yndaros is far from finished the city has grown to enormous proportions, and at the same time Korinthia's knights have conquered all land between the mountains in the south and the

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and the day dawned, when the spawn of the Serpent took to arms, when the crimes of countless days must be counted and atoned for, horn by horn, fang by fang. And the sinners wept with blinded eyes, they moaned with severed throats, they fled on fractured limbs. And Symbaroum fell, into dreamless sleep ..."

It was not much chieftain Haloban of the Jezites and his clan warriors could do when Korinthia sent her battle-hardened army to crush them.

woods in the north. Now the nobles of Ambria are starting to plan for new conquests, in the north and in the west.

Seven years ago the uncrowned king of Ambria's treasure-hunters, Lasifor Nightpitch, established the town of Thistle Hold. The construction was largely financed by the reward Lasifor had received for an armful of dried Twilight-Thistle – a rare herb, allegedly powerful enough to aid the gravely ill Abesina, mother of Queen Korinthia. Ever since then, the walled settlement of Mayor Nightpitch has acted as a safe haven for Ambrians exploring Davokar, a forest full of natural resources and rich remnants of long lost civilizations; also a forest full of rampant abominations, dark-minded creatures of otherworldly origins and a band of wardens most unwilling to welcome the damages done by human explorers.

The Promised Land

THE REGION KORINTHIA is determined to conquer is dominated by Davokar, a forest that in itself is as varied as a continent. Traversing the woods from Thistle Hold to its northern edge would take weeks, if not months, and on the way one would have to face beasts as well as hostile elves, blight-stricken abominations and treacherous nature.

South of Davokar a rolling landscape of fertile plains stretches out. Where they are not plowed by Ambrian farmers they are covered by pale green grass or small groves where the birds and beasts of the lowlands find shelter. This is Ambria, a kingdom divided into seven duchies encircling a domain ruled by the Church of Prios, the Sun God and the Giver of Laws. The Grand Duchy of Korinthia is by far the largest, just as the capital city of Yndaros is larger than Thistle Hold, Ravenia and the high seat of the Sun Church, Templewall.

The region is framed on two sides by towering mountains – the wild and majestic Titans to the south and the Ravens to the east, growing taller and steeper the further south one travels. Aside from some mining colonies and the monastery of the Twilight Friars south of Yndaros, the Ambrians are yet to establish any noteworthy settlements in the mountains. Instead they have become a refuge for

Timeline

–1000 (approximately)
The civilization of Symbaroum crumbles into oblivion

–500 (approximately)
The clans of Davokar unite under a high chieftain to battle the Spider King. The city-state of Lindaros is founded

–200 (approximately)
The population of Lindaros is wiped out by an infectious bleeder's disease

–21
The Dark Lords conquer the border city of Berendoria

–19
Alberetor strikes back against the Dark Lords and the Great War starts

–10
King Ynedar is killed; Korinthia is crowned the Queen of Alberetor

–5
The sun god Prios is declared to be the One and the provider of Alberetor's laws

–2
Korinthia is taken captive by the Dark Lords

0 (winter)
The Queen is rescued, the stronghold of the Dark Lords is stormed and the war is over

0 (autumn)
The barbarian settlement of Kadizar surrenders and becomes Korinthia's foothold in the new land

5
The duchies of the new realm are established, from the Ravens in the east to the river Eblis in the west

7
The Queen arrives, the new realm and the capital city are given their names

8
The Cathedral of Martyrs in Yndaros is inaugurated

10
The clan Jezora is slaughtered and its chieftain Haloban executed on the Triumph Plaza

11
The eighth duchy is established and its main town of Sevona founded

13
Thistle Hold is built

15
First Father Jeseebegai ascends to the High Seat of the Sun Church

16
The battle of Karvosti results in an agreement according to which the Sun Church is allowed to restore the temple ruin on the plateau

19
The Queen dictates that all craftsmen must get organized in guilds

21
Present day

robbers, free-thinkers and rebellious barbarians. And as for the dwarven realm of Küam Zamok, its inhabitants appear to be totally indifferent to humans, with the exception of the few families that, for reasons unknown but wildly debated, have settled down in Yndaros.

The climate is colder and more humid compared to what the Ambrians are used to. Damp winds from the southern oceans climb over the Titans and are not the least embarrassed to drown Ambria in heavy rains, especially during the autumn. The winters are cold, with snow covering the streets of Yndaros for a month or two, or even longer during the winters that the barbarians call Istaros, when arctic winds sweep down from the north, so cold that hearths which are allowed to go out can barely be brought back to life and the blood freezes in anyone who dares venture outside for longer than it takes to collect more firewood.

The Ways of Life

SINCE LONG BEFORE the arrival of Korinthia and her subjects, the land north of the Titans was home to a motley array of creatures with diverse customs and an often complicated relationship to one another. The presence of the Ambrians has affected the people of the region in different ways – in part as a result of adaptation, in part as an effect of defiance or at least a need to demonstrate some kind of uniqueness relative to the new lords of the land.

This section offers a portrayal of the more or less cultivated creatures living in the woods and on the plains. The depiction is brief and therefore simplistic – in actuality there are lots of exceptions to what is said below. But if you keep that in mind the text should provide a relatively fair account of the people, culture, traditions and conflicts of the region.

PEOPLE

In broad terms Davokar and its surroundings are inhabited by three distinct groups of people – Ambrians, barbarians and the Elder Folks (for instance elves, goblins and ogres). If you were to ask any single representative of one of those groups about such classifications he would probably feel uncomfortable being lumped in with individuals that to him appear as more or less strange. But that does not alter the fact that there are some shared characteristics within those groups which make the categories justifiable.

The Ambrians all stem from the dead realm Alberetor south of the Titans. The Great War has made them tough but also forced them to become

MAP COVERING THE KNOWN PARTS OF
Ambria & Davokar
DRAWN BY CARTOGRAPHER
TABEO CRANEPLUME
0
100 KM
SCALE 1:4 000 000
N
NE
E
SE
S
SW
W
NW
GAOIA
ENOAI
SAAR-KAHN
GODINJA
DAVOKAR
YEDESA
VARAKKO
Jerak's Sinkhole
BAIAGA
BLACK PITCH MIRE
The Ruin City of Odaban
ZAREK
Serand's Pyramid
Sun Temple
The Columns of Haganor
VAJVOD
THE RAVENS
Sevona
VOLGOMA
Karvosti
MALGOMOR
Earth Towers of the Black Leech Rift
KARCHAR
ODAIOVA
Jakaar
Melima
Karo's Fen
THE MARSHES
NEW BERETOR
EANOR
Thistle Hold
NEW BERENDORIA
EBLIS
Kurun
NARUGOR
Templewall
Kastor
Ravenia
PRIOS DOMAIN
SERAGON
KASANDRIEN
Agrella
YNDAROS
DOUDRAM
MERVIDUN
EBEL
NOORA
Mergile
VELOMA
YNDARIEN
Redina
Küam Zamok
THE TITANS

disciplined and organized, in terms of military and bureaucracy as well as regarding trade and divisions of labor. In short: the war has civilized the Ambrians as a people, even though it may have brutalized many of its individuals.

The Ambrians are capable and experienced when it comes to waging wars, but they are also characterized by a profound spirituality and an aptitude for refined skills and nuanced knowledge. Other than that you will find a common quality in their ambitions: they are a people bent on conquest and ownership; they always strive for more and better, whatever it concerns. Nature is regarded as a resource, filled with supplies which can make life more comfortable, or in any case more tolerable, and many Ambrians would willingly risk life and limb in the hope of finding treasure, knowledge or rare goods which could secure them a comfortable future.

When it comes to the barbarian clans they actually live in greater harmony since the arrival of the Ambrians. It is commonly accepted that the clan folks are descendants of Symbaroum, the civilization that ruled the region up until a millennia ago. There are of course huge differences between the clans in terms of lifestyle and customs, but in the end they have much in common. What they share is probably best symbolized by the witches, the spiritual leaders of the clans and advisors to the chieftains. Under the guidance of the witches, the barbarians are fully aware that they are living in and consequently are depending on nature for their safety and survival. And they have all borne witness to what happens when one does not respect the taboos dictated by the Huldra, the head of all witches who lives on Karvosti alongside the High Chieftain.

Finally there is the vague category called the Elder Folks, including elves, dwarves, goblins, trolls, ogres, changelings and others. A majority of the individuals sorted under this label tend to see themselves as nature's children, rather than its owners or rulers. There are of course exceptions, not least among the goblins who have gotten a taste of Ambrian abundance and even more evident among the dwarven families living in Yndaros. But by and large, the Ambrians and the Elder Folks are very dissimilar in this respect.

The disagreement, not to say animosity, is most apparent in the conflicts between Korinthia's subjects and the elves of Davokar. With reference to a treaty that supposedly was signed by many human lords around the time of Symbaroum's fall, the wardens of the woods demand that all Ambrians stay clear of the forest. They even claim that an ancient alliance called the Iron Pact gives them the right to slay any human who violates the terms of the treaty – a claim that Korinthia and her knights scoff at and which no serious treasure-hunter takes seriously.

Colonists and Free Settlers

Of all Ambrians it is the colonists who have most contact with barbarians and the Elder Folks. Today all land between the Titans in the south and Davokar in the north, between the Ravens to the east and the river Eblis to the west is considered to be colonized by Ambria. But Korinthia's ambitions are greater than that. Indeed, a dozen new settlements have been established in places still ruled by other powers. A majority of these can be found up to a day's travel past the tree-line of Davokar, for instance on the southern shore of Lake Volgoma or on the route between Thistle Hold and Karvosti. Others are located in the mountains and at the forest's edge west of River Doudram.

Another group of southern origin that lives near the elves and barbarians are the Free Settlers: refugees from Alberetor who have taken the opportunity to break free and form societies of their own. These settlements are typically made up of ten to thirty families that for some reason have chosen to stick together – in most cases because they profess their loyalty to some other deity than Prios.

In the early days of Ambria the Free Settlers had no trouble finding some corner of the Promised Land they could claim as their own. But with time many have found themselves repressed by the expanding kingdom and some have even been forced to move deeper into Davokar. Freedom from oppression comes at a considerable cost, a cost that gets higher and higher the further Korinthia's domain extends. Even so, there are still about twenty free settlements in forests and mountains that refuse to submit.

SPIRITUALITY

Much changed in the wake of the Great War. The most radical change was when the sun god Prios went from being one of many accepted deities to being recognized as the One. Where the Dark Lords represented darkness and death, Prios came to symbolize the light of Alberetor and the life giving power of the sun. Or as Jeseebegai, the current First Father of the Sun Church, has expressed it: *"In the abyss, in absolute darkness, was the spark which gave hope to the world, the spark which in the care of we Ambrians will make Prios blaze as never before."*

Today Prios is recognized as the Giver of Laws or as the One, and almost all Ambrians adhere to His commandments, as conveyed by the priests and theurgs of the Sun Church. Prios is said to be everywhere beneath the heavens and humans are tasked with cultivating His creation. Sadly, man has neglected this duty for a long time, which in turn means that Prios has lost much of His strength, so much in fact that He is dying. But according to the sermons there is still hope. If humans strive to

The Hordes of Darkness

Despite the fact that more than two decades have passed since the victory, the Dark Lords and the Great War is ever present in the lives of the Ambrians.

Usually people only talk about the triumphs, about the heroic deeds of the lightbringers, about how the armies of Korinthia massacred hordes of undead creatures. All else is repressed – not least that the Queen's soldiers were often forced to kill the same enemies again and again; enemies that, in addition, had been their brothers and sisters until they fell victim to the murderous magic of the Dark Lords.

The ones who were there remember. Those who have nothing but stories to go on fantasize. But with the exception of ravings caused by nightmares or too much to drink, the Ambrians never talk about the fear and the horrors. No, Korinthia's subjects try their very best to look ahead, no matter how difficult life may seem. They are determined to grow so strong that no one dares attack them ever again.

correct the error of their ways – if they work harder, extract more crops from the soil, harvest more and richer resources from forests and mountains, colonize more of the wilds – then Prios will grow strong again.

In the quest to honor and strengthen the Sun God, Davokar has a vital role to play. The wild, unruly forest is considered to be the perfect example of what happens when humans refrain from doing what they are obliged to do. Davokar must be cleansed, its potency disciplined and its resources cultivated. It is to advance that quest that the Curia, the high council of the Sun Church, sends missionaries as well as explorers to the depth of Davokar, and why they already have established a temple on Karvosti, the age-old Thingstead of the barbarian clans.

In the shadow of Prios the abolished deities live on, gods that actually bear a striking resemblance to the deities of the clans. Concerning the religious beliefs of the barbarian folks, many a theurg and learned master have tried to describe and categorize the gods, spirits and divine beings worshiped in Davokar. So far they have not succeeded. Evidently the clans are very dissimilar when it comes to how they relate to spiritual powers. As mentioned, some worship deities similar to the gods banished by the Ambrians. For instance, the serpent god Uron revered by the Gaoia clan shares features with the Ambrian Earthmother; the Baiaga clan's bloodwolf Arex is clearly related to the Ambrian Pathfinder; and the spider Oroke, who is worshiped by many, has some qualities in common with the Executioner. But among the clans you will also find worship of ancestors, holy grounds, beasts and sheer monstrosities like the bestial Blood-Daughter of the clan Saar-Kahn. Regarding religious rituals there are also great discrepancies between the clans, from collective prayer sessions to downright deadly customs – as when the members of clan Enoai allow themselves to be bitten by venomous spiders, in order to get closer to Oroke.

The Elder Folks appear to have a more relaxed approach to spiritual matters. Instead of worshipping or praying to divine beings they seem content with showing gratitude towards the spirits which, according to them, inhabit all aspects of nature. They give thanks to the stream for letting them traverse the rapid waters unharmed. They offer their gratitude to the hazel for letting its nuts fall to the ground. They whisper thank you to the deer for allowing itself to get trapped. It is said that Elori, the Elven emissary in Yndaros, was asked about his beliefs during a visit to Queen Korinthia's court. His exact response is obviously only known to those present, but according to rumor he replied with an insult: "It is a vain presumption to think that the world would care about being worshiped or that it would listen to prayers; it is a presumption which mirrors man's own desire to be worshiped and his expectation that he can force his will upon the world."

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Ambrians as well as barbarians are storytellers. The barbarian folk value a good narrator almost as highly as a skilled warrior, and the High Chieftain on Karvosti always has one or two select storytellers living in his fortress. These chroniclers are often chosen from among the participants of the annual contest held during the market days at the autumn equinox, and are considered to have a special responsibility for remembering and recounting historical events.

Aside from the telling of stories, the leisurely activities of the clans tend to involve weapon games and rituals paying homage to nature. It would probably be misguided to describe the clans'

Taboos of the Baiaga Clan

Avoid the slopes of the Crypt Ridge: there Grabando rests in shallow slumber and may not be disturbed.

Do not mention the Whitewater Walker by name: for she will heed your calling and respond with force.

Never devour the spring fruits of the Red Bell: its nectar is tainted, its seeds corrupt.

Never drink of rainbow-colored water: it aggravates the thirst and makes it unhealthy.

Do not listen to singing sprung from unseen throats: that is a warning, not a calling.

relationship to Davokar in terms of worship, but under the guidance of the witches all barbarians are careful to show gratitude towards the forest that feeds them and teaches them humility. In that, as in most other cases, the storytellers play a vital role – especially when it comes to cautionary tales that account for what may happen if one violates the taboos dictated by the Huldra.

Among Ambrians storytelling takes many different forms. The bards and poets who perform in taverns, restaurants and inns are very popular, but the same can be said about prominent actors, dancers and artists. Within all these art forms portrayals of the Great War are common. Tales about individuals who have pleased Prios, so-called Lightbringers or Martyrs, is another popular theme. However, in recent years a newcomer has appeared on the Ambrian stage: tales of Davokar – of fortune-hunters who have found their fortune; of heroic encounters with arch trolls and lindworms; of rich treasure chambers found in overgrown ruins. Additionally, the Ambrian storytellers have made it their business to visit

The Prophesy of Sarkomal

According to rumors circling both Yndaros and Thistle Hold, the Sun Church has recovered a prophecy from an old temple ruin a couple of days' walk east of Karvosti. First Father Jeseebegai firmly denies all knowledge of such a find but that has hardly stopped the rumor mill from grinding. Quite the opposite. In a short time numerous versions of the prophecy have appeared, all reflecting the same basic theme – Ambria is supposed to gain lordship over all land once ruled by ancient Symbaroum and Queen Korinthia will ascend to the throne of the empire's last emperors.

That basic theme aside, the versions differ greatly from each other. When it is supposed to happen, how it will happen and whether or not it will be to the advantage of the Ambrian people depends on which version you choose to trust. There is really only one strophe which recurs in all versions, claimed to be translated by the Curia: "...where night and day are without meaning, where darkness shimmers and light gathers in shadows, there stands the throne that again shall carry a mistress, a regent, a peer of the divine...". But, as previously mentioned, no one has confirmed the authenticity of that passage, nor of any other. And even if someone had, there is likely room for any number of translations and interpretations, as always when prophesies are concerned.

their barbarian colleagues to learn popular stories from them, including the ancient poems attributed to the legendary huldra Aroaleta.

Aside from the Ambrians making use of more forms of storytelling, there is another significant difference between the groups: while almost all barbarians take part in the rites of the witches and listen to tales told around the fire, the Ambrian people are divided into a number of sub-groups. The nobles have their own venues for dance, theatre and music, and love to cover their walls in grandiose tapestries with themes from battles or nature. Merchants and craftsmen often visit the same salons, where they place themselves according to fortune and stature since the prices vary depending on where you sit. Free, laboring Ambrians listen to tales told in the taverns while thralls, serfs and commoners in the countryside have to settle for the tall tales told by their elders as they assemble for the evening meal. Of course there are exceptions, but the principle can hardly be questioned: the subjects of Korinthia are undoubtedly stratified in terms of both assets and interests.

The origin of the hulking Colossi is widely debated. But it is an awesome sight, when one gets to see Davokar's witches being carried by these seemingly gentle monsters.

AREAS OF CONFLICT

Given that the three main populations in the region have such a disparate relationship to Davokar, you would probably conclude that the Ambrians always collide with the Elder Folks, and that the barbarians are caught somewhere in between. Of course it is not as simple as that. There are lots of individuals who do not fit that mold – Ambrians who join the elves in their ambition to keep Davokar in peace as well as single barbarians, elves, changelings and ogres who have made their homes in Ambria.

Nevertheless, the general climate of the region is one of open conflicts, characterized by the Ambrian ambition to explore and exploit Davokar and the Elder Folks' reluctance to let them do so. Presently, Queen Korinthia's people seem to be the unchallenged rulers of the plains between the mountains and the forest, and it would probably take an all-embracing pact of barbarians and elves to change that. But in the woods the balance of power is more even. The Queen's army has a hard time functioning with full efficiency in the forest, while local knowledge and experience provide their counterparts with a great advantage. Furthermore, the Ambrians have a hard time confronting the horrors of Davokar on a unified front. Special interests linked to factions, blood or personal gain are often given priority at the expense of the common good, not least when it comes to managing and distributing information, resources and treasure found in the woods.

The latter also paves the way for joint ventures involving a mixture of Ambrians, barbarians and others. Instead of contacting factions like Ordo Magica or the Queen's Rangers, many dukes and barons have initiated collaborations with barbarian or goblin chieftains. And the wizards, scholars and Rangers tend to act in a similar fashion – better to pay the locals for help than to divide any profit or advances with other Ambrians. The only exception from this is the Sun Church, whose representatives are unwilling to mix with the "creatures of the night". On the other hand, they engage in missionary campaigns and can in that way utilize the knowledge and skills of converted goblins, barbarians and ogres.

In other words, to give a clear cut and straightforward account of the relationship between the peoples of the region is both difficult and fundamentally misleading. In order to understand how collaborations, quarrels and armed conflicts arise you have to take a large number of factors into account, not least the factions described in the upcoming chapter. Moreover, you must understand that in light of the escalating threat from the corrupt powers of Davokar, basic necessity may require the most unlikely alliances to be forged.

Factions

THIS CHAPTER OFFERS a brief introduction to the most powerful factions of Ambria, along with a similarly short glance at the barbarian clans and the Elves of the Iron Pact. In general terms these groupings can hardly be described as harmonious – power struggles are as frequent within as between the factions, and the goals of individual leaders may both alter with time and be contested by subordinates. But in the end it is fair to say that power and influence are linked to the formations described below, and that one would have to be extremely clever to reach one's goals without having allies among the prominent members of at least one of them.

Queen Korinthia and an escort from the Twilight Friars wander through Yndaros, towards the Cathedral of Martyrs and a memorial service for the victorious dead.

Houses of Nobility

AMBRIA, AS ALBERETOR before it, is a hierarchal society, for centuries governed by an assembly of noble families, called houses. The families are ranked based on their position in the order of succession, and the rank affects what offices their representatives may hold.

Ambria is divided into seven duchies, in turn divided into smaller domains, called counties or baronies depending on their size. Formally, it is the Queen who appoints dukes, who then appoints counts and barons to manage subjects and land. But there have been lots of exceptions from that order of things. For instance the Queen may nominate individuals to the title Prince of the Realm – a position which gives its owner a duke's power over a smaller piece of land. It is also rumored that the Queen on a couple of occasions has appointed counts against the will of the concerned duke and that some of the counts command such authority that the people in the region show him more respect than they grant the official ruler of the duchy.

Ranked first among the noble families is the royal House of Kohinoor, personified by Korinthia Nightbane and five of Ambria's six dukes, all of them closely related to the Queen. That may sound like a harmonious affair, but according to gossip and campfire tales there are circumstances which complicate the situation. That the Queen's mother married a new husband, bore him the daughter Esmerelda and then fell gravely ill is one of those; that Korinthia's only living uncle is bitter that he missed his chance at the throne is another.

Queen Korinthia

Head held high and with unwavering confidence, Queen Korinthia carries the hope and sorrow of her people. She was not more than twelve years old when King Ynedar died on the battlefield, but she did not hesitate to pick up where he left off. She inherited his mount, the legendary Master; she had his broken lance restored; and she led the forces of light on a ten years long counteroffensive against the armies of the night.

Two years before the end of the war, Master died, gravely wounded by a poisoned spearhead, and Korinthia was taken captive. The enemy celebrated without understanding that he had engineered his own demise. The desire to rescue the captured Queen gave her knights such valor that not even death magic could make them falter. Korinthia was freed from her prison and commanded a decimated battalion of Templars in the decisive assault on the Dark Lords' fortress.

The years in captivity and the death of her homeland have not broken Korinthia's spirit. Sure, her lacerated face is nowadays covered by a mask of glazed porcelain, but she is still the same: a triumphant warrior queen, given the honorary title Nightbane for her victory over the dark.

The rumors claiming her to be weak or even dying, or the ones declaring that she actually died in captivity and that the woman behind the mask is someone else, are never spoken except in wheezing whispers and in the company of very close friends.

The Huldra Yeleta

Although he would hardly admit it, not even Commander Iakobo Vearra, first among the Knights of the Dying Sun, is comfortable looking Yeleta in the eye. Her grotesque masks, her wild manners and thunderous voice are enough to frighten parents as well as children, and the stories told of her cruelty are hugely popular in the taverns of Yndaros.

Yeleta instills fear and fascinates. At the same time most Ambrians cling to the belief that the Huldra – or the Arch Witch as some call her – never leaves her home in the caverns piercing the cliff of Karvosti, and some even claim to know that she in reality is nothing more than a wise old crone, powerful but not at all evil.

That she is connected to the creatures of Davokar is beyond doubt, but whether or not she is actually allied with them is another question. Maybe she is yet to decided which side she is on, the side of the beasts or that of the humans? Maybe she, and thus the barbarian clans, will make a decision before long.

Furthermore, when the Queen's cousins are said to be incompetent bordering on useless and when the other houses long for an opportunity to dethrone the Kohinoors, anyone can see that Korinthia has had to reexamine the situation carefully before appointing the dukes of the Promised Land.

On the other hand, one should not believe everything one hears. Provided that appearances are not tremendously deceiving, the rule of Ambria works as it should. There is steady progress in the development of the regions, the army stands firm in the face of Davokar's abominations and new colonies are established every other month. And even if the rumors contain some small elements of truth, hardly anyone questions Korinthia Nightbane's ability to handle the odd domestic quarrel.

YNDARIEN

The Grand Duchy of Yndarien is Queen Korinthia's domain, rich in rain, fertile fields and not least in people. About forty percent of Ambria's population lives between the mountains and the river Doudram, and new refugees arrive every day. Although most of them are passed on to other provinces, especially to the colonies of New Berendoria, there are many who argue that the mountain passes should be closed off. And maybe they have a point – how much will the Promised Land be worth if buried under a tidal wave of diseased scavengers?

MERVIDUN

Mervidun is officially ruled by Abesina, the seriously ill mother of the Queen. In actuality the domain is governed by Duke Sesario, the man Abesina married during Korinthia's captivity and with whom she has the daughter Esmerelda. From his high seat in Mergile he captains the trade in metals, granite and lumber – products that because of swift transports along the river Noora have made Mervidun one of the richer duchies in Ambria.

NEW BERETOR

New Beretor is ruled by Duke Ynedar, the son of Korinthia's brother Korian who died while trying to free his imprisoned sister. Ynedar, named after his grandfather, is no older than the Ambrian kingdom and governs a region that can boast of having great relations with the barbarians. The duchy also takes pride in the ingenious methods developed to extract fire oils from the wetland called the Marshes.

SERAGON

When the immediate family is not enough to close the ranks you turn to more distant relatives, in the case of Seragon to the son of the former king's younger brother. The orphaned Duke Gadramei is accused of being a lackey who drinks more than he should, and who neglects his duties towards Queen and country. But even if Seragon is poorer and more unruly than other duchies, its Duke has so far managed to protect the Davokar border with flawless efficiency – despite the fact that his province borders the territory of the aggressive clan Karohar.

KASANDRIEN

The Queen's half-sister, the seventeen-year-old and very spirited Esmerelda, is the Duchess of Kasandrien. The city of Agrella is situated on the shores of Lake Ebel, making it a vital node for transports along the rivers, and the Duchess is also honored by housing the head office of Ordo Magica in her province. Aside from that, Kasandrien is famed for being influenced by Esmeralda's decree: "The victorious dead shall be celebrated and praised, not mourned!" Agrella is a city of eternal jubilations.

NARUGOR

The Duchy of Narugor stretches along Davokar's southern tree line and contains the fortifications Otra Senja and Otra Dorno, underlining that Duke Junio Berakka has been given a special responsibility to stop the darkness of the woods from seeping out over Ambria. The duke himself – a hero of the people whose accomplishments have hoisted him to a position of highest nobility – is an example of how the war's end and the migration have affected the previously rigid structures of the noble houses.

NEW BERENDORIA

The popular belief is that Alesaro Kohinoor has not forgiven his niece, even if it was not her, but a group of military commanders and prominent nobles who prevented him from succeeding his brother. The fact that Korinthia gave him the duchy of New Berendoria is hardly a comfort, since she probably appointed him to that barren and windy outback in order to get rid of him. Be that as it may, current reports from his high seat Sevona state that Alesaro is making new friends among the western clans.

PRIOS DOMAIN

At the heart of Ambria lays Prios Domain, with First Father Jeseebegai functioning as the steward of the Sun God. Where Ambria's largest highroads intersect – the one between Yndaros and Thistle Hold and the one between Kurun and Ravenia – rests Templewall, high seat of the Sun Church, surrounded by rolling plains where the crops sway in the wind and the cattle graze peacefully, assured that they are safe from harm.

This transcript, partly damaged and unreadable, was found in the pocket of an explorer who fell down and died right outside the North Gate of Thistle Hold. It is said that the expedition she was part of aimed to find the fabled city of Symbar at the heart of Davokar.

The Barbarian Clans

WHEN THE AMBRIANS arrived in the region south of Davokar, thirteen barbarian clans were living in the area. Since then thirteen has becomes eleven, as clan Kadiz was subdued and integrated into the Ambrian civilization and clan Jezora was annihilated by Ambrian steel. Recently there have been rumors circling about a possible twelfth clan, the fiendish brutes of the Beast Clan. But while the existence of such a clan is yet to be confirmed, and especially since the barbarians seem to be equally confounded by the flourishing rumors, Ordo Magica and other authorities are ignoring them, pending more reliable accounts.

Lately the relations between the clans have changed, because of the arrival of the Ambrian people but also because of the slowly but surely escalating threat from the beasts and abominations of Davokar. Reasons aside, the clan chieftains have all declared themselves to be aspiring for peace, and judging by appearance they try to live up to that promise. Sure, it is still turbulent in some borderlands, not least up north as well as between Karits and Vajvods in the east. But at the moment the region is free from outright clan wars.

The barbarian High Chieftain, seated on Karvosti, is elected for life during a gathering at the Thingstead held when the reigning "warlord" is nearing death. But he is not elected to rule. Instead the role of the High Chieftain is to arbitrate or, when necessary, act as a judge in conflicts within and between the clans, and only if requested to do so by the clan chieftains.

The chieftains must of course pay heed to the opinions and wishes of their subjects, but they have no obligations to obey or even listen to some superior power. So even if there are similarities to be found between them, each clan has its own structure of laws, customs and hierarchies.

What similarities exist can first and foremost be attributed to the witches. The leader of witches is called the Huldra, and just like the High Chieftain she resides on Karvosti. Four times a year (at the winter and summer solstice, and at the spring and autumn equinox), the Huldra assembles the leaders of the clans' hex nodes, called Keepers. It is said that the purpose of these gatherings is to discuss the state of Davokar, but according to rumor much time is also allocated to talks about, and the search for solutions regarding, conflicts that officially are to be dealt with by the High Chieftain. The witches undoubtedly have a huge influence over the High Chieftain as well as over individual clan chiefs; so huge, in fact, that Levia Soleij, a respected Master of the Order, claims that Yeleta, the current Huldra, has a greater hold over her people than Korinthia has over the Ambrians.

High Chieftain Tharaban

The High Chieftain of the barbarians has his seat on the plateau Karvosti, about five days' ride northwest of Thistle Hold. Pilgrims who have visited the sun temple on Karvosti say that the High Chieftain resides in an impressive stronghold, surrounded by a curtain wall and protected by the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath. Tharaban himself is not often seen. Sometimes he can be spotted looking out over Karvosti from a balcony on the stronghold, and on occasion he has been observed walking over the plateau, on his way to meet with the Huldra or walking towards the Thingstead, always surrounded by a dozen Wrathguards.

Rumors describe him in contradictions, as a skilled diplomat or a complete moron; as a mighty warlord or a weak figurehead whose commands are dictated by the Huldra. Whatever the case, backed up by the ninety-nine Wrathguards the fur clad Tharaban is a force to be reckoned with.

GAOIA

The members of clan Gaoia living furthest to the north are regarded as brutal and primitive, even by other barbarians. They are said to be allied with a lindworm, called Grandfather Lint, and are hardly ever seen in the south. The only exceptions are their rugged Wrathguards and the slightly more polished envoys that clan chieftain Rábaiamon sends on a courtesy call to Karvosti every other year.

ENOAI

The Enoais are tree-people, living in tree-tops or in caverns carved out under the roots of giant pines. One example of the latter is the legendary village of Enovak, where clan chieftain Karona resides. The settlement is comprised of about fifty households and a marketplace, all situated under the towering pine which shares its name with the clan.

GODINJA

Many of the masks carried by barbarians are made by the craftsmen of clan Godinja. Its proud people claim to be the descendants of old Symbaroum's ruling elite – a belief that members of other clans question, but without indignation. Instead outsiders point to the fact that the Goeds up until a couple of generations ago were closely associated with the elves of Davokar. And they are happy to echo the rumor stating that Godinja's clan chieftain, the mighty Vikomer, has elf blood coursing through his veins.

YEDESA
Compared to their northern neighbors, the Yedes actually have better reasons for being proud. Of the last ten High Chieftains six have been fostered by clan Yedesa, including the current one. The reason for this may be that the clan long ago abandoned a nomadic lifestyle, in favor of a few permanent settlements. Since the annihilation of clan Jezora, chieftain Leonod's stone fortress is clearly the most impressive construction of the barbarian people.

BAIAGA
Aside from them often being seen on both Karvosti and in Thistle Hold, the Baiags are known for fighting alongside their tame bear beasts, called baiagorns. They live in small groups that roam the clan territory hunting and fishing, but many choose to leave the hunting grounds for varying periods – something which other barbarians tend to regard as a sign of rootlessness or disloyalty.

ZAREK
The Zareks count among the barbarians who seem most willing to accept an Ambrian presence in Davokar. Their main settlements are situated along the northern shore of Lake Volgoma, and it is said that they have developed a close partnership with Alesaro Kohinoor – a partnership which probably was established when Monovar, the chieftain of Zarek, helped the Ambrians to destroy his arch enemy, Haloban of the dead Jezora clan.

First Father Jeseebegai
The man who sits on the Evening Throne at Templewall was born Demeon Soleij. He was a priest in the battalion that liberated Queen Korinthia from the Dark Lord's prison, and was actually the one who made the rescue possible. In a celebrated act of heroism he walked naked through the unholy firewall that held Korinthia captive and carried her out. The Queen escaped with mild burns while Demeon lost his eyes, his hair growth and sustained severe scaring over his whole body.

Even so, nobody has ever heard the faithful Black Cloak complain about his injuries. Unlike Korinthia he has never made an effort to conceal the scars on his face; he has settled for a blindfold, if only to protect his empty eye-sockets from becoming infected. And when the former First Father passed away there was little question who would succeed him. The Curia only needed an hour's time before proclaiming the ascension of Convent Brother Demeon as First Father Jeseebegai. And they could not have made a better choice: No one loves Prios the way he does; no one fights with such resolve to give the Ambrian people courage enough to please Prios and to replenish His might.

ODAIOVA
The territory of clan Odaiova spans between Karvosti and Thistle Hold, which means that the route between the two settlements traverses their grounds. Hence, one should not be surprised that the Odavs have gotten used to the Ambrian presence and learned to capitalize on it. It is often the people of Odaiova who act as intermediaries in contact and trade between Ambrians and barbarians, which means that the clan chieftain, Embersind, lives a much more comfortable life compared to other barbarian leaders.

KAROHAR
Unlike the Odavs, the warmongering Karits are distrustful, if not hostile, towards the new lords of the realm. This can probably be explained by the fact that Ambrian treasure-hunters have invaded their territory during the past decades, scaring game away and attracting elves. Or could it possibly have something to do with what happened to the former ally of Karohar – Haloban and his Jezites? Regardless, the territory of the Karits is far from safe.

VAJVOD
Southeastern Davokar, particularly the area around the stone fortress Vojvodar and River Doudram, is the home of the Vajvods. The remote location and the relative openness of its inhabitants have made it possible for the Ambrians to gain a firm foothold in the territory, clearly demonstrated by the colony Karo's Fen, the trade ships sailing all the way up to the source of the river and the forward base that the Queen's Rangers have in the area.

SAAR-KAHN
The Saars of clan Saar-Kahn speak in a guttural language, barely comprehensible to other barbarians. They live in self-imposed isolation around an ancient fortress, worshipping the beastly Blood-Daughter and regarding themselves as the true heirs of Symbar. A couple of times a year, Saarian raiders attack other barbarian settlements, but clan chieftain Razameaman places all the blame on rebellious separatists – claims which other clans have opted to believe, until proven otherwise.

VARAKKO
Furthest south, close to the Ambrian border, the Varaks travel the plains in their wagons. They comprise the smallest clan, which to a large extent is due to the fact that they are especially exposed to attacks from "rebellious" Saars. With the express permission of Duke Alesaro, the Varaks nowadays

often keep to the Ambrian side of the border. And it is said that the duke is making efforts to end the blood feud which rages between the Varak chieftain Didramon and Monovar of Zarek.

The Church of Prios

THE CHURCH OF the sun god Prios governs a domain of its own in Ambria, a territory large as a duchy centered around the city of Templewall. The First Father of Prios resides in the city, selected for life by the Curia – the ruling body of the Church, which is comprised of the leaders of its three subdivisions: the Priesthood, the Templars and the Twilight Friars. Jeseebegai who now sits on the Evening Throne at Templewall was elected from among the Twilight Friars six years ago.

The theurgs and liturgs of the Priesthood are responsible for interpreting Prios' commandments and for managing all His temples, from the cathedrals in Yndaros and Templewall to the repaired shrine on Karvosti. Their current representative in the Curia is named Anabela Argona and is the sister of Count Alkantor Argona; a bond that the count is accused of exploiting in the ambition to expand his domain and influence.

The Knights of the Dying Sun, also called Sun Knights or Templars, are the armed wing of the Church. Its well-equipped and highly skilled Templars, who all stem from noble families, played a crucial part at the end of The Great War – a fact which Knight Commander, Iakobo Vearra, never lets anyone forget.

Finally, the Twilight Friars, also called Black Cloaks, is a monastic order with its main seat south of Yndaros, up in the Titans. Aside from a handful of convents in Ambria's larger settlements, the order manages a convent school in Yndaros and is in charge of internal as well as external intelligence activities. The spokesperson of the order, Brother Eumenos, is often heard declaring that whilst the Templars aim their swords towards Ambria's outer enemies, the knife points of the Black Cloaks are aimed at those within.

Ordo Magica

ROUGHLY A YEAR ago Ambria's most prominent order for learned studies and mystical schooling, Ordo Magica, relocated from Yndaros to Agrella on the shores of Lake Ebel. Grand Master Seldonio governs an organization with chapters in all larger settlements as well as a handful of outposts in Davokar. Each chapter is run by a Chapter Master, under which the Masters of the Order are sorted. The latter are experts in their respective areas – for instance Botany, Elf Studies, Beast Lore and Wizardry – and all have a number of novices and adepts working for them.

The primary ambition of Ordo Magica is of an explorative nature: its members seek knowledge for knowledge's sake. They arrange expeditions to both forests and mountains, from which they bring curious artifacts to be studied in search of their properties and applications. Instead of spirituality the members argue that philosophy must be the primary tool for expanding the understanding of the world, and in the end they rely on experience and evidence rather than on faith – something which often causes its members to clash with theurgs and black cloaks.

But the single-minded search for knowledge does not mean that the order is totally cut off from the rest of civilization. Seldonio appears to be fully aware that he is in need of others – for instance, he needs the Queen's blessing to explore Davokar, the silver thalers of the nobles to finance expeditions, and the Rangers to take members of the order along on their patrols. It should also be noted that the order strives to capitalize on knowledge gained and discoveries made, as for instance shown by the Vivisectory in Yndaros where ordinary people can pay entrance to bear witness as the masters carve into everything from farm animals to rage trolls and actual abominations.

Grand Master Seldonio

Many a mighty master fell victim to The Great War. Seldonio survived because he was the head of the order, and therefore was needed at the war council far from the front line. Exactly how old he is, he probably does not know himself, but under the name Seldonio he appears in epics composed nearly two centuries ago. And even if some people blame him for having acted like a coward during the war, there is hardly anyone who doubts that he counts among the mightiest mystics in Ambria.

But most powerful he is not. Three other Masters of the Order made it through the war alive: the stormweaver Variol, Kullinan of the dead House of Furia and, probably mightiest of the all, the mindwarper Elionara Yellowcat. It is said that these three pushed through the relocation of the headquarters to Agrella against Seldonio's will – they wish for peace and quiet and time for studies, and have no sympathy for the Grand Master's interest in Ambria's men and beasts. This has resulted in a situation where Seldonio spends more time at the chapter in Yndaros than he does in his chamber in Agrella. And if one is to believe what is whispered among adepts and novices, this may very well mean that Seldonio's days as the head of the order are numbered.

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and the search goes on forever, for the hidden Ambal Seba, where the truth is spelled in gold, where the keys to the primal power are etched in circles, round and round the thirteen pillars. See, the mists will never fade. Not even Fofar the Destroyer can dispel the veil over a valley that does not exist."

The Queen's Army

QUEEN KORINTHIA IS Ambria's Commander in Chief, but most of the day-to-day operation of the army is commanded by the elderly Field Marshal Beremo Herengol. The army is divided into six divisions, paid for and maintained by the duchies, and a seventh one belonging to the Grand Duchy of Yndarien, serving directly under the Queen. Each division includes infantry, cavalry as well as archer and tross units.

Additionally, the army incorporates the Rangers and the Queen's Guard, called the Pansars. The latter is commanded by General Jomilo and is stationed in a newly restored fortress west of the capital. The Rangers are in most regards detached from the army at large, primarily focused on intelligence work and reconnaissance missions in the border regions. Its commander, Colonel Revina Kalfas, is said to be one of the Queen's closest friends and rumors have her pointed out as the next Field Marshal, when the current one is forced into retirement – rumors which makes the blood of the army generals run hot.

Beremo Herengol

Beremo stems from a long line of prominent commanders and is regarded by most as the crown jewel of his house, especially because he was highly responsible for the outcome of The Great War. He has been the realm's Field Marshal for twenty-six years and is closing in on his seventies, which has accelerated the speculation about him stepping down. But so far nothing indicates that he or the Queen have any such plans – as late as during the New Year's celebrations of Year 21 he spearheaded the honor guard and looked to be in great shape; according to some, in an unnaturally great shape.

The rumors surrounding the second most powerful commander in the kingdom are many. There are those who claim that he already is exhausted but that the Queen refrains from dismissing him because of his long and faithful service. Other gossip states that Beremo is allied with dark forces that fill him with youthful vigor, or that the old one has some kind of hold over Korinthia which prevents her from relieving him.

Envoy Elori

The task of negotiating with Queen Korinthia has ever since her arrival been owned by a towering and very stern elf named Elori. Before the migration, the Ambrians had never had contact with the Elven kind, and the unwillingness of the forest people to let them explore Davokar has made them detest the "pointy-ears" as intensely as they hate rage trolls and abominations. Elori himself seems to appreciate the situation. He is seldom seen on the streets of Yndaros, and when it happens he is always on his way to or from the royal palace, escorted by royal guards.

It is said that Elori has come to Yndaros in search of a peaceful solution to the conflicts between men and elves, but no one doubts that that he primarily has been sent to spy. This belief was greatly strengthened the other year when he had a visitor – namely Aloéna, the giant she-being who otherwise resides in a grove on the cliff of Karvosti. What was said between them is not to be known, but since then Elori is sighted more often. The taunts and objects thrown at him bother him as little as ever before.

The Iron Pact

THE ELVES SPEAK of the Iron Pact, but exactly what that is and what function such an alliance would serve is highly debatable. According to legends told at the taverns in Yndaros, the elf wardens of Davokar claim that the human race consented to leaving the forest in their care and swore never to set foot in the depth of Davokar again. This promise is supposed to have been endorsed by a long list of human rulers, including Korinthia's forefather Argalo and the ancestors of the current clan chiefs Rábaiamon and Razameaman. It is also said that the human rulers gave the elf lord Eneáno a gift to seal the treaty – six thousand rings of iron.

Among the barbarians there are some legends which could be interpreted as proof of the existence and legitimacy of the Iron Pact. On the other hand they could as well be based on lies told to the barbarians by devious pointy-ears. Evidently, the Ambrian nobility have opted to put their faith in the latter interpretation, even though the elves every day make good on the threat to seek vengeance on humans who violate the treaty.

Davokar

TO PRODUCE A SUMMARIZED ACCOUNT of Davokar Forest is a challenge – partly because of its varied and changeable character, partly because so much of it is yet to be reliably mapped. For centuries the barbarian clans have kept to the outer areas of the forest, from the edge to about four days' march inwards.

The reason for this is said to be twofold. On the one hand, the outskirts contain all they need in terms of prey and useful plants; on the other hand they abide by a long list of strict taboos that ban them from entering the deep. The witches claim that Davokar is sleeping, that the forest must not be disturbed, that death and destruction will follow if the edicts are violated.

THE STRATEGISTS AND EXPLORERS of Queen Korinthia, including Ordo Magica, generally agree that the witches exaggerate. Instead they cling to the belief that the taboos echo threatening warnings made by elves, and that the edicts primarily are devised to keep peace with the wardens of the forest. But the strategists also call for caution. The Ambrians still know far too little about Davokar's past – about the fallen civilization of Symbaroum and the origin of the abominations – to be able to rule out that the witches' legends contain one or two grains of truth.

Whatever the truth may be Davokar is there, at the threshold of Ambria, the Promised Land of Korinthia Nightbane. It rests there with its enormous riches, in terms of natural resources and treasure-filled ruins. To leave it in peace is completely at odds with the Ambrian disposition.

Maybe that same disposition can account for the Ambrians' obstinate attempts to explain the inexplicable? The description of Davokar found below is based on the Duality Principle, put forth by Mallianos, a renowned Master of the Order. It is perhaps the simplest and most comprehensible description of Davokar to date. Hence, it is simplistic, in some cases even misleading, but in the end it will give you a hint of what awaits in the shadowy halls beneath Davokar's tree tops.

A wildly debated text, found at the northern entrance to Serand's Pyramid, possibly stating the name of the pyramid's architect.

Bright Davokar

MALLIANOS IS STATIONED as Master of the Order at the Yndaros chapter and is highly religious. The latter is evident in how he describes Davokar as divided into two main regions, based on whether or not the sunlight can penetrate the leaves to reach the ground. Many of his slanderers argue that he

Explorer's License

Since the autumn of Year 15, the person of Ambrian heritage who wishes to venture into Davokar must obtain an Explorer's License, formally known as "License for travels in and explorations of Davokar Forest". The license can be bought on a monthly or annual basis, at the headquarters of the city watch in Yndaros or at the Queen's Legation in Thistle Hold. The cost varies depending on the number of people it covers: the bigger the group, the higher the cost per individual. In other words, for a company of adventurers encountered by a Ranger patrol in the wilds, it is not enough to present individual licenses.

Adding to the basic price there are a number of costs related to the aim and composition of the expedition. Whether you aim to gather or harvest some resource or explore an area, there is no escape from paying the base price for those three categories, since the licensor presumes that you at least will gather firewood, harvest some berries and perform explorations in the most general sense of the word. The arbitrariness of the system angers most people, particularly when it comes to the supplementary costs for incompetence and intentions – the former related to the wildlife experience of the group, the latter based on an assessment of to what degree the expedition's aim may be considered disturbing or provoking. But for anyone who wishes to travel the woods without risking hefty fines or the loss of fingers/hands there is no alternative but to come up with the sum dictated by the authorities.

Table 1: The Cost for an Explorer's Licence

NUMBER OF PERSONS	COST PER MONTH	COST PER YEAR	ADD-ONS
Single person	2 thaler	9 thaler	—
2-5 persons	10 thaler	50 thaler	—
6-8 persons	25 thaler	90 thaler	—
9-10 persons	55 thaler	180 thaler	—
Unlimited	—	450 thaler	—
Gathering	—	—	3–10 thaler
Harvesting	—	—	5–12 thaler
Exploring	—	—	5 thaler/person
Wagons	—	—	5 thaler/wagon
Incompetence	—	—	5–15 thaler
Intentions	—	—	5–50 thaler
Other	—	—	1–50 thaler

has designed the classification in close partnership with Father Peonio, First Theurg at the Cathedral of Martyrs in the capital.

Mallianos describes, not entirely incorrectly, the outskirts as strikingly beautiful and remarkably lush. During summer, beams of sunlight shimmer in humid air filled with soaring seeds and dancing insects, making the moss and ground blossoms gleam. The fiery splendor of the autumns is even more striking, and the virgin white of the winter calm also has its fair share of admirers.

However, Mallianos utters a word of warning: no matter how beautiful the natural surroundings may seem, you can be sure that they are full of hidden dangers – fruits and berries can be lethal on ingestion, and many inexperienced wanderers have reached their end at the bottom of a marsh that was mistaken for solid ground.

As for its creatures, Mallianos describes Bright Davokar as the domain of barbarians and prey animals. Of course, this implies that it is here predators come to hunt – packs of mare cats, jakaars and etterherds as well as solitary rage trolls and even famished abominations. Adding to that, the elves must be mentioned. The cautious spring elves apparently love nothing better than to subject human wanderers to all kinds of more or less deadly mischiefs, while the hotheaded summer elves are happy to use the same travelers as targets for their perfectly aimed arrows – not least if they are in, or are traveling toward, areas deemed especially sensitive by the wardens.

Finally some words about the ruins of the outskirts. The southern regions and the area surrounding Karvosti have already been thoroughly explored by the Queen's Rangers, Ordo Magica's expeditions and independent fortune-hunters, leading to the discovery of sites like Serand's Pyramid, the Columns of Haganor and the grand aqueducts of Clearwell. But that does not mean that there is nothing more to unearth. Even today, the lucky and well-prepared may still find untouched ruins close to the southern border. And if one dares to venture further north or to delve deeper down into the soil, the chance of interesting discoveries are multiplied.

Dark Davokar

BEYOND THE ELUSIVE border which Mallianos has established between bright and dark, there are regions that should not be traversed without great care, detailed preparations and a sizable company of sword-wielding companions. In contrast to the outskirts, the depth is riddled with grave dangers and there are neither barbarians, nor Ranger patrols that can come to your rescue. In short: one never ventures into the dark of Davokar without being prepared to risk one's life in the hope of gaining riches, knowledge or fame.

According to Mallianos, Dark Davokar is characterized by a dense and wild vegetation that closes out all light. Here the flaws of the Duality Principle are revealed – the few fortune-hunters who have traveled into the dark and returned with their health and minds intact testify that the sunbeams actually do reach the ground in there. They can also tell you that this certainly does not mean that the horrors go away.

Whatever is true or false when it comes to the many postulates by Mallianos, there are reports speaking of a very devious nature in Davokar's inner regions, a nature whose threats lurk where one would least expect – threats in the form of bottomless streams, tiny but poisonous creatures, overgrown sinkholes and carnivorous or bloodthirsty vines. There is also talk of infections and parasites which make their victims insane, paralyzed, rabid or undead; of ancient curses with similar effects; even of areas defying all reason, where it snows in the summer, where plants shimmer from some inner glow and where nightmares inexplicably come to life. But neither Mallianos, nor Lukresia, nor some other authority on the nature of Davokar can claim to actually know which of these statements correspond with reality. If any.

The truth is just as uncertain when it comes to the inhabitants of the deep. That there are raving abominations, beastly rage trolls and packs of tricklestings and hunger wolves may be concluded from the stories told by returning explorers. And maybe there is some truth to the rumors about a predatory and bloodthirsty barbarian clan, even if its dwelling is yet to be found. But when there is talk about shapeshifting creatures of otherworldly origins, bone-pale elf warriors, possessed mastodons and cunning dragons, the testimonies are far fewer and less reliable.

The same goes for the barbarian stories about shadowy beings like Lord Bog and the Hawthorn Hag, ancient creatures who, according to legend, are as powerful as they are wrathful. The problem is that those who come across the residents of the forest do not often get the opportunity to return with their tales. And a majority of the lucky ones return in a state which makes it hard to believe what they have to say.

HYMN TO THE LEAFY DEEP, BY TAUBIO

Shimmering curtains
of golden rays,
a heavenly scent
in the air,
everything dressed
in a misty haze,
a realm so
remarkably fair.

Butterflies soaring
on wings so frail,
a fox cub is
trailing a deer.
That squirrel is
slumbering nose in tail,
so sure there is
nothing to fear.

But close by the
squirrel, mere
leaps away,
all beauty is
withered and dead.
There ravenous beings
are stalking their prey,
with cravings too
great to be fed.

Murderous creatures
are everywhere
molded like
phantom or beast.
And flowers as deadly
as they are rare,
are welcoming you
to their feast.

Oh Davokar, take me
and hold me tight,
I'm yielding my
being to you.
To die in your arms
on some starlit night
is all that I long to do.

What drives Ambrian explorers to defy the dangers is of course the hope of finding treasures from the days of Symbaroum. Mallianos makes no effort to hide the fact that the further into Davokar you travel, the greater is your chance of finding well-preserved and rich ruins. But he also points out that, first, the ruins of the Dark are often overgrown or hard to find since all that remains is below ground; second, that they always are inhabited by someone or something ready to protect its turf. And even if one should take this "always" with a pinch of salt, reports from both the Rangers and Ordo Magica suggests that his warnings are warranted.

On the other hand, venturing into the Dark may still be worth the risk. Judging by the fortune salvaged by Iasogoi Brigo during one single visit to the ruins of Odaban, one who finds the path to places like Saroklaw, Dakovak or even Symbar will hardly return empty handed. If they but return at all.

Travels in Davokar

AS SOON AS you have acquired an explorer's license you are free to set foot in the forest. If you keep to the charted route between Thistle Hold and Karvosti, or the one between the forest edge and the outposts established in the woods, you can feel quite safe since they are patrolled by the Queen's Rangers. But should you divert even slightly you must be prepared for nasty surprises.

In the outskirts it is possible to travel by horse, although not at a very high speed since there are no paved roads. In the long run it is often preferable to walk and lead the animal by the halter. If so, you can cover two to three mile a day, depending on the terrain and the density of the vegetation. You would do well to bring lots of water and dried meat on your journey, since the streams and springs of the forest sometimes are infected and since open fires tend to attract unwelcome guests to your camp

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and as Eregan foretold: 'the wise man's road is long, twice as long through murky woods; the foolish man's road is short, half as long through murky woods, cut short by folly and bloody bashings'."

site. In Davokar every meal may be your last, if you are not careful to take the right precautions.

Deeper in the woods riding is rarely an option, and having the equipment tied to a pack animal can be a very bad idea – there is a significant risk that the animal will bolt at the first sight or whiff of a rage troll, leaving you to face the horrors of Davokar empty-handed. No, to Dark Davokar you never go without a number of companions, including a skilled guide who knows to avoid dangers and who can find clean water as well as edible plants and prey.

In the Game Master's Guide on page 183 you will find more, and more detailed, information on travels in Davokar, but simply put: every journey into Davokar is hazardous. Those who are not sufficiently prepared may very well find their first excursion to be their last.

Symbar

It is said that all barbarians in the Davokar region stem from the same civilization; an empire called Symbaroum that supposedly had its high seat located in what today is the center of Davokar. The legends about the fall of Symbaroum are numerous, most of them variations on the theme: that its last emperor angered some form of supreme being and thereby caused the empire's ruin.

Many dream of finding the heart of Symbaroum, called Symbar by witches and barbarians. Many have tried, but as yet no one has succeeded. Or, to be precise, no one has yet returned with credible and publicly announced stories about a successful expedition to Symbar. But that does not deter fortune-hunters from planning and launching new expeditions, led by men and women who all claim to have irrefutable evidence to guide them. Because as long as the tales about Symbar's treasures outweighs the stories about its horrors, the allure of the myth will live on. And claim life after life after life ...

Thistle Hold

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN the simplest of excursions, but the expedition to the ruins of old Odaban ended in disaster. Already at dawn on the fourth day we encountered a wounded rage troll, struck by more than a dozen Elven arrows and eager to get company on the road to the beyond. He made two of my friends tag along; another two followed the day after, victimized by a fever caused by the rage troll's bites. And before we had traveled half the distance three more were dead. Keros was lured out on treacherous quagmires by fairies one night; Fabia's arm was severed by a blight-stricken elk and she bled to death; and our goblin guide, Lurks, took his own life after having received a deadly gift of a poisonous tricklesting.

By then only me and one of our sellswords were alive. My hope had fled, my heart welcomed death as a dear old friend. But the warrior dragged me south, forcing my legs into action. His will burned hot and yet his effort would have been pointless, were it not for another fiery flame. When my strength was all but drained he took me on his shoulders and carried me up, step by step, branch by branch, along the stem of a towering pine. And as we reached the top he slapped me across the cheek, pointing to the south.

There, still far away, flamed the fire that gave me strength to carry on – the Beacon of Thistle Hold, a bonfire raised above the moonlit ocean of leaves, calling me to safety and warmth and a bolstered mattress. That is how I survived, as so many before me. Mayor Nightpitch's sanctuary is the harbor of all explorers and fortune-hunters, from which we embark on our journeys and towards which we then strive. Back home.

The Eastern Gate, seen during the calm that settles for a short moment each night, right before dawn.

Background

WHEN IT BECAME KNOWN that the Queen's mother had taken ill and the House of Kohinoor announced that a sizable reward would be given to anyone who could provide a cure, Lasifor Nightpitch knew that his time had come.

Together with his companion, the barbarian witch Yagaba, he collected an armful of Twilight-Thistle from a secret location deep inside Davokar and delivered it to the Queen's medicus. He waived part of the reward in exchange for a title as Prince of the Realm over the area previously ruled by the warlord Haloban. What remained of the payment was used to fund the construction of a brand new town, right on the threshold of Davokar.

That is how Thistle Hold came to be, born out of a retired fortune-hunter's dream to secure his own future, and at the same time do something in benefit of his exiled brothers and sisters. The walled town is today neither more, nor less than it was meant to be: a fairly safe place at the brink of Davokar where the people of Queen Korinthia can find shelter, rest, trade and amusements before – as well as after a possible return from – expeditions into the forest. That Mayor Nightpitch lives a comfortable life financed by tolls and taxes no one begrudge him, especially since a part of the income passes on to the Queen's treasury – and because the founding of Thistle Hold has facilitated trade and other connections with the barbarian clans.

The birchwood palisade and most of the buildings within were erected over the course of the summer and fall of Year 13, largely thanks to the goblin tribe that Mayor Nightpitch had befriended during his travels. Today the town has about 6000 permanent residents, but counting visitors, peasants from surrounding areas and people passing through there are about 10000 people inside the walls at any given moment. Order is maintained by a well-paid town watch, led by Lasifor's brother and mostly composed of veterans of The Great War.

Misbehavers can expect punishments which often are harsher than the ones handed out in Yndaros – after repeated petty crimes the wrongdoer can find himself being relieved of all earthly possessions and tossed out through the town gates, sometimes a couple of fingers or a hand poorer.

The boundaries between the formal, tax-paying citizens and its guest-laborers are sharp as the edge of a barbarian waraxe. So long as a citizen refrains from unprovoked murders and torture, he or she can do almost anything to the guest-laborers without risking reprimands. Other forms of temporary inhabitants are treated more fairly, but if they do not have a renowned name or cannot flaunt signs of wealth or boast of possessing extraordinary skills, they must accept being greeted with a cold, almost contemptuous attitude. In Thistle Hold might is right, the mightier the person, the greater his rights – that is nothing to be ashamed of, but to take pride in.

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and deep down the world was violated, because the shell is suited for the force within; to add power to power without bracing the hide is as inexcusable as it is inconsiderate. For when the shell ruptures the force released is multiplied by the thousands, from anger and shame."

Overview

THE PALISADE, thirty feet high and made of heavy birch logs harvested at the forest edge, encircles a settlement that has become denser and more towering with time. The broad streets that were deemed necessary to stop the flaming bursts of Elven arrows from lighting up the whole town have with few exceptions been replaced by narrow alleys between buildings that have expanded in both width and height. To counteract the negative effects of such a change, more of the woods have been cut down so that the distance between the North Gate and the forest edge now spans about two hundred paces. Additionally, the number of towers on the northern portion of the palisade has been doubled and all are equipped with both ballistas and catapults.

Nonetheless, the Hold's more prominent citizens have chosen to build their homes on the south side of town. This is where you find the fenced wooden palace of Mayor Nightpitch, the Queen's Legation, the tower of Ordo Magica and a number of fancy residences, many belonging to some of Ambria's greatest explorers – Iasogoi Brigo, Lysindra Goldengrasp, Elmea Rabbit's Foot and Goracai the Young, he who discovered the aqueducts and the sunken city of Clearwell.

The center of town comprises the hub of all commerce in Ambria's northern region, especially when it comes to the trade in finds recovered from Davokar and handicrafts manufactured by barbarians. Lined up around the Bronze Well at the Antique Plaza are market stands for buying and selling goods, but you will also find the Agency of Mother Mehira and Father Sarvola's missionary station close by. To the east, west and north of the center family homes, guest houses and taverns lay side by side, more mixed up compared to the southern district where family homes are in majority. An exception can be found in the district surrounding the Toad's Square. That area has developed into the town's center for pleasures and intoxication – a development that gained serious momentum two years ago, as the pleasure palace called Salons of Symbaroum was established.

Surroundings

NORTH OF THISTLE HOLD there is a small strip of open ground before the forest begins. It is commonly known as the Firebreak, but is of course mainly there to prevent the people and beasts of the woods from approaching unseen. Highroads run both towards Yndaros and from east to west between the forts Otra Senja and Otra Dorno,

towers that have kept their names from when they were part of Haloban's defenses. Along the road linking the forts manned watch towers are posted about a thousand paces apart and a moat is under construction – twelve paces wide and fifteen paces deep – protecting the lowland from the beasts of Davokar.

Despite the fact that a pass or cash payment is needed to enter the town, the founding of Thistle Hold has revitalized the whole region. The noble House Argona has its estate nearby and supports a village close to its residence, about one day on horseback south of the Hold. Furthermore, the smaller House Erebus manages the land directly south and west of the town, and House Derego the land to the east. As a consequence, farmlands stretch out all the way between Otra Senja and Otra Dorno – a popular hunting ground for the beasts who manage to cross the highroad undetected.

Closer to the palisade, on the road to Yndaros, rests the permanent tent camp called Blackmoor, or more teasingly Thistle Scold. Many are the residents of Blackmoor who work in the Hold but whose employers are unwilling to pay for them to live in town – builders, servants, washers, housemaids and so forth. But with time, Blackmoor has developed into a refuge for all fortune-hunters, pilgrims and independent explorers who either can not or will not pay for the protection of Mayor Nightpitch. And that has in turn given rise to more permanent inns, taverns and other establishments. So, in spite of total anarchy and a lack of formal blessing from the Queen, Blackmoor is rapidly turning into a permanent settlement. And should it keep going at the same rate, it will not be long before its population exceeds that of Thistle Hold.

Another permanent colony can be found about an hour's ride to the east, directly south of the highroad. There dwells Karabbadokk, the goblin tribe that has built most of Thistle Hold and whose members even today perform most of the heavy and dirty duties for Mayor Nightpitch – they harvest and transport lumber, sweep the streets before daybreak, and provide service as dishwashers, bellow-boys, messengers, latrine cleaners and moat-diggers.

To be fair, the goblins are good for more than that. Foremost among the Karabbadokks are the chief of the tribe, Idelfons, and the former guide to the wilds, Garm Wormwriggler. Other notable members are the chimney-crawler Yppa, hoop-net-maker Olf and the ogre brothers Kulds and Klagga who are hired when something heavy must be carried in the Hold or during excavations in Davokar.

Curiosities

THIS SECTION CONVEYS a description of the most interesting and noteworthy places in Thistle Hold. The list is far from comprehensive, but hopefully offers a clear view of the town's character and atmosphere. What is hidden under the surface will not be dealt with in this book, other than in the form of hints and rumors that can be heard on taverns and plazas.

NIGHTHOME

Aside from his companion Yagaba and a staff of servants, Mayor Lasifor Nightpitch lives alone in a wooden palace called Nighthome. The building, three stories high, stands atop a softly sloping, grass-clad hill encircled by a man-high fence. The only other building on the plot stands by the fence-gate, and is occupied by the Mayor's personal guard.

The rumors swirling about Nighthome and what can be found within are of course many. There is talk of vaults full of gold, walls draped in antique tapestries and facial masks, and not least of the miraculous herbs growing on the roof terrace – for example the moonlight-loving Nightrose and the Silverlily that emanates sweet sugar-sap. But aside from the witch and the servants only a few select people have been allowed to see more of the building than the Mayor's ground floor office. Great caution is taken, since Nighthome must be considered every burglar's most coveted target.

THE QUEEN'S LEGATION

The eldest daughter of House Argona, a meticulous and educated widow named Suria, acts as the official legate of the Queen in Thistle Hold. The newly constructed legation is placed close to the fence of Nighthome and houses a staff of seven, entrusted to speak for Korinthia's administration and to send daily reports on large and small matters back to Yndaros.

Suria's father, the imposing Count Alkantor Argona, has come to spend more and more time on the upper floor of the building, a floor which he disposes of as if he owned it. Persistent rumors claim that he governs his daughter with an iron fist, and that she for her part is fully occupied by trying to cover up her father's taste for all forms of lowly pleasures. Such gossip aside, there is no doubt that the Count often meets with the Mayor and the

reason for that is commonly known: both have a lot to lose by the continued growth of Blackmoor, especially since the situation plays in favor of the unruly House Erebus and its charismatic leader, Baron Grafoldo.

ORDO MAGICA

The tower of Ordo Magica is, besides the Beacon, the tallest building in Thistle Hold. Reaching seven stories high it stands on a plot surrounded by a stone wall, a plot where the novices of Master Cornelio grow and study various herbs salvaged from the forest. A short time ago they discovered the flammable oil than can be extracted from the damdra-seed – something which has resulted in large-scale, troubled excavations on the turf of the lindworm Skaramagos.

Officially it is the Master of the Chapter, Cornelio, who runs local affairs. But there are always other masters at the tower and sometimes the arguments

TAVERNS
1. Afadir's Triumph Tavern
2. Brew
3. The Dump
4. Odovakar
5. Blackbrew
6. The Salons of Symbaroum

INNS
7. The Court and the Harp
8. The Winged Ladle
9. The Witch and Familiar
10. Arkerio's Guest House
11. The Rose Garden
12. The Ruin
13. The Barracks
14. The Seamstress' Rest

ENTERTAINMENT
15. Spectacle
16. Benego's
17. Legends
18. The Hangman's Pole
19. The Abomitorium

TRADE
20. Marvalom's
21. The Rope and Axe
22. Big-Basher's Smithy
23. The Thaler's Drugstore
24. The Treasury
25. Faraldo's Novelty Store

OTHER
26. The Town Seat
27. Nighthome
28. The Sun Temple
29. The Queen's Legation
30. Ordo Magica
31. The Mission House
32. Mother Mehira's
33. The Town Watch
34. The Beacon

SQUARES AND PARKS
35. The Antique Plaza
36. The Queen's Square
37. The Toad's Square
38. The Eastern Square
39. Park of the Elders

Table 2: Agents for hire

NAME	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	RISKTAKING
Serex Attio	Fighter	Excellent strategist, experienced in battle, tough, temperamental	High
Vanoya Skullsplitter	Fighter	Strong, fearless, loyal, headstrong	High
Urfons	Fighter	Great local knowledge, discreet, selfless, goblin	Extreme
Gruffy	Pathfinder	Knowledgeable about beasts, good tracker, quiet, ogre	High
Hugalea	Pathfinder	Great scout, moves silently, hygienic, goblin	Foolish
Serafia	Pathfinder	Great tracker, good aim, skilled climber, understands elf tongue	High
Galfenio	Mystic	Free mage, great combat skills, somewhat labile, changeling	High
Meomaar	Mystic	Witch of clan Baiaga, speaks with animals and plants, touchy	Low
Elvea	Mystic	Wizard, knowledgeable about herbs, unwavering	Extreme

between them echo far across the rooftops. The greatest conflict seems to be the one between the Chapter Master and the two other permanent masters in Thistle Hold, Goncai and Eufrynda. The fact that the latter two have been observed cuddling in a stall at the Salons of Symbaroum is hardly to the advantage of Cornelio. In fact, it may eventually lead to a change from the Chapter's current caution to more bold strategies of exploration.

THE BEACON

The lives of nine goblins and three ogres were lost in the construction of the miraculous light tower that looms about three hundred feet above the Toad's Square. The fire which blazes at its top is fed oil from a shelf fifty feet below; a shelf serving as a lookout post for the Queen's Rangers. The soldiers stationed up there are also tasked with stopping the many ruined and hopeless people in town from using the platform as a gate to the peaceful beyond.

The massive tower has become something of a symbol for the Ambrian struggle to tame the wilds, and the wardens of Davokar appear to have declared it their primary target. Only taking the latest year into account, three attempts have been made to burn it to the ground. In all three cases the attacks were carried out by unscrupulous citizens on the brink of ruin who had been bribed into action. Who paid them is not known, but according to the rumor mill the answer is obvious: the gold came from the witches or the elves, alternately from the human-hating alliance they both are believed to be part of.

MOTHER MEHIRA'S AGENCY

When the former treasure-hunter Mehira lost her left arm, her right eye and the major part of her respiratory capacity in an encounter with a group of tricklestings she put the adventurer outfit on a shelf and settled down in Thistle Hold. But just like her former colleague, Mayor Nightpitch, she was unable to rest on her laurels. It did not take long before she had a new business up and running, one which proved to be both lucrative and beneficial to the ambitions of the Queen.

Any fortune-hunter may register at the agency, relating his or her personal details along with a description of important skills and the willingness to take risks (low, high, extreme, foolish). The skills are sorted under the categories a) Fighter, b) Pathfinder and c) Mystic, and must upon enrollment be verified in some way. Once the agent has received a first assignment, the contractors get to evaluate his performance; evaluations are used to rank the agents. The price you must pay to hire an agent is then based on his or her rank, the supposed timeframe of the contract and its estimated level of risk. A quarter of the cost and a fixed deposit are awarded Mother Mehira, the rest is paid to the agent once the job is done.

THE MISSIONARY STATION

In close proximity to the Antique Plaza is a building which has acidified the relations between Mayor Nightpitch and the ruling body of the Sun Church, the Curia – namely the missionary station of the highborn sun priest Father Sarvola. The elderly liturg has long been notorious within the Church for calling its practices crude, heartless and condemning. He says that: "Just like the sun generously shines upon high and low, wretched and pious, so shall our Church treat all children of Prios with the same warmth and love." Since coming into an enormous inheritance a couple of years ago he has used his newly acquired wealth to spread this message of love and compassion – a message that persuades a slowly increasing number of newly ordained priests to help him in the tasks of running the soup-kitchen in Blackmoor and proselytizing both there and among the Karabbadokks.

The fact that Mayor Nightpitch allows Sarvola to run his heretic movement in town is highly disapproved of by literalist theurgs and Black Cloaks, especially by father Elfeno, the head of the local sun temple. But the Mayor argues that so long as you pay your dues and refrain from inciting riots anyone is welcome to stay. However, there are many indications that the agents of the Church will take matters into their own hands. New malicious rumors about Sarvola surface on a daily basis and his sermons are often disrupted by boos and seemingly spontaneous outbursts in the audience.

THE ANTIQUE PLAZA

What happens in the Antique Plaza at the center of town is determined by the ebb and flood caused by the varied success of treasure-hunters and explorers. The stalls and booths are of course always there, and so are the potential and very eager buyers from Yndaros and the noble houses. But sometimes the latter cannot do much else but sip hot beverages at the plaza's famous tea-houses or examine the ancient bronze well – a remnant of old Symbaroum that in fact is the reason why Thistle Hold is located where it is.

Everything changes when one or two expeditions return from the wilds. Usually it takes a couple of days before the treasures reach the plaza, since a select crowd of potential buyers always get the opportunity to inspect the items first. But when that happens the whole block is turned upside down: food and drinks are served from every window; the sound of voices arguing about prices combines with the cacophony of bards trying to outperform each other and the cries from victims of muggers. Only inside the Treasury and Faraldo's Novelty Store – the establishments that most often are awarded the privilege of selling the finest antiques – does a relative calm prevails as the auctions proceed.

THE SALONS OF SYMBAROUM

In Thistle Hold there is a huge selection of dives, dens and finer taverns where the townsfolk can appease their various needs and wants. But among these establishments the Salons of Symbaroum has earned itself a special status. You may get the best tenderized deer steak at Afadir's Triumph Tavern, the sweetest syrup beer at Brew and the best gaming odds at Benego's, but only under the roof of Ordelia Wildjoice do all these pleasures come together.

The Salons of Symbaroum, or "the Salons" for short, offer three stories of pure delight and two of the dirtier kind – the visitors may eat, drink, gamble, enjoy exotic shows or pay for entrance to the top floor where they can appease various carnal desires. However, the latter is only an option during six out of seven days. What happens up there on the seventh is not commonly known, but there are three main rumors: meticulous cleaning, sessions with special guests or occult rites led by Ordelia herself.

THE GARRISON

The town watch of Thistle Hold is both numerous and well-paid. The one hundred fifty guards are divided into three shifts but can in times of trouble be amassed in full strength. When that happens they make a formidable fighting unit, not least because they are led by a trio of very experienced officers. The captains Tallios, Marvello and Dekamedo are, like most of their subordinates, veterans of The Great War, where they all acted as commanders in densely populated areas. To suppress unrest, lecture mischief-makers and predict where trouble will arise are their specialties.

According to persistent rumors the town watch's only real problem is that its commandant lacks much of the commitment shown by its captains. Herado Duskwatcher is the younger brother of Mayor Nightpitch, and it is said that he was awarded his position only because Lasifor wanted a commandant he could trust and control. Much suggests that the temperamental and anxious Herado, a man with a velvet fist in an iron glove, may prove to be a liability if and when the town watch is tested for real.

THE TOAD'S SQUARE

In the shadow of the Beacon lies a large, circular plaza surrounded by taverns and dives, including the Salons of Symbaroum. If one were to name one single place as the most dangerous in town, it would have to be the block neighboring the Toad's Square. More deaths occur there than in the rest of Thistle Hold combined, and it is in close vicinity to the Beacon's foundation that most of the town's shady affairs take place – affairs that often go overboard since active town guards seldom are seen in the district.

However, what is most renowned about the square is without a doubt the statue which has given it its name. Standing on a base made of black basalt, encircled by a stone-framed pond, stands the reassembled skeleton of a huge, toad-like monster. The carcass was found quite intact under the construction of the palisade and was restored by scholars from Ordo Magica. Even though the beast itself is enough to inspire the wildest fantasies, most speculations tend to be about the modest brass bell hanging in a ribbon around the creature's neck. Does the bell imply that the giant toad was once someone's pet? In that case, whose? Or was the

The Bronze Well of Thistle Hold

The roofed bronze well that today marks the center of Thistle Hold was up until Year 10 placed in the courtyard of the warlord Haloban's fortress. That it originates from the glory days of Symbaroum has been established by Ordo Magica's scholars, who also have made attempts to decipher the symbols inscribed around its rim. The text tells the story of the birth, life and death of some mighty being; that much seems to be agreed upon. But in terms of detail the interpretations differ, both regarding what actually made the being remarkable and concerning what kind of creature it was – a serpent, a dragon or some other kind of reptile. What is evident for any and all is that the well still produces fresh and crystal clear water that each day quenches the thirst of a large portion of the townsfolk.

creature itself thinking and astute, wearing the bell as jewelry? And why is its tone so frail? Would it sound differently if its original, not yet recovered clapper was found?

THE RUIN

In Thistle Hold there are many guest houses and inns of varying quality. The representatives of the Queen and the noble houses gladly visit the Court and Harp at the Antique Plaza or the Winged Ladle near the eastern gate; explorers often stay at the Seamstress' Rest close to the tower of Ordo Magica, while less wealthy visitors tend to be drawn to the establishments in the vicinity of the western gate – The Witch and Familiar, Arkerio's Guest House or the cheap but flea-infested Rose Garden. But for treasure-hunters, there is no place like the Ruin.

The guest house is as old as the town itself and has had many distinguished patrons. For example, it is said that Iasogoi Brigo stayed at the Ruin before going on the expedition that raised him to the skies, and the same has been said about Lysindra Goldengrasp. Should one put faith in the claims made by the owner, Master Pergalo, those two names are but the start of a long list of successful fortune-hunters who have blessed their expeditions by spending a night under his roof. In addition, many are tempted by the inn's afternoon soup, cooked over an open fire in a giant cauldron recovered close to where the Toad's Square's skeleton was unearthed. No one has been able to decipher the archaic inscription covering it, but whatever they may say there is no doubt that the cauldron is perfect for cooking soup.

Persons of Interest

EVEN IF MOST PEOPLE living in or passing through Thistle Hold have a connection to Davokar and the ruins of Symbaroum, there are also those who lead perfectly ordinary lives – they awake at dawn, go to work and toil (or roll their thumbs) until it is time for supper. The individuals described in this section may not be completely ordinary, but they can hardly be counted among the prominent or influential. Instead they are meant to represent a varied assortment of inhabitants – people that the player characters can make contact with upon their first visit to Thistle Hold. And, as if by chance, they all have some kind of ambitions or dreams which they need help to realize.

KADRA, FORTUNE-HUNTER

No more than fourteen years of age, the orphaned Kadra arrived at Yndaros in a caravan filled with refugees. In the luggage she had nothing but traumatic memories: the death of her parents, her uncle's guardianship, the defiance of her big brother Julio which led to his death and to Kadra being thrown out into loneliness and poverty. All alone in the Promised Land she really had to struggle to survive, first as a servant in the capital, later as a maid on the estate of the House Argona.

At the estate she met other young boys and girls dreaming of freedom and riches. They visited the inn at Argona Village, listened to stories about the treasures of Davokar and eventually they decided to give it a go. Out of the group who started the journey towards, and later on down into, Jerak's Sinkhole, only a badly bruised Kadra made it back. Luckily she did so with a bag full of precious artifacts salvaged from the ruins in the deep. Since then two years have passed and Kadra still gets by on what she earned from selling the finds, waiting for the right people to cross her path – capable adventurers who can accompany her back to Jerak and who are willing to let her keep at least half of the loot.

GANDERALD, EXPLORER

Ganderald, an adept of Ordo Magica, is a changeling, born among the elves of Davokar but fostered by the members of clan Karohar near the forest edge. Like the majority of his kinsmen, he left his human family when his adoptive parents passed away. After having roamed the Ambrian countryside for years, he happened to end up in Yndaros as Ordo Magica held its "annual tryouts", when anyone may perform the Order's test of admission. He passed with flying colors and has in two years risen to the rank of adept.

Today Ganderald works for Master Goncai and shares his ambition to study and understand the Elder Folks, particularly the elves. Ganderald's special project involves the mapping of all observations made of elven activities, in the hope of uncovering where they might have their villages, cities or meeting places. At the moment he is focusing on two locations, both situated far beyond the border of Davokar, and he is trying to convince the Chapter Master that they are worth a closer look. When he succeeds he will be in need of capable traveling companions.

ELDA, ANTIQUE DEALER

Elda of clan Godinja has with her bone pale hair and blue-toned skin always felt like an outsider amongst her people, not to mention a disgrace to her parents.

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and troll-mother Vouax's cauldron, lined with the words of the weaver, smeared with the fat of the wardens, fell down the abyss, fell into oblivion. The vessel brewing the downfall of all may never again be heated, not by fire, not by the dark of the Abyss."

More or less by choice she has preferred to roam the woods rather than taking part in the community. And she has never taken note of the elders telling her to stay away from the ruins of old. Consequently she had collected a respectable amount of finds and riches even before she heard about the Ambrians and their hunger for Davokar's treasures.

As Thistle Hold opened its gates, Elda was one of the first to buy a small house inside the palisade. She leads a simple life, develops her network of explorers and fortune-hunters, and keeps her stall at the Antique Plaza relatively well-stocked with interesting items. The commissions she collects to hand out certificates of authenticity and to peddle the merchandise are lower than that of most competitors, which may be a reason for newly hatched fortune-hunters to stay on her good side. Additionally, she keeps full track of all rumors of interesting hunting grounds and may very well give adventurers a nudge in the right direction, in exchange for the right of first refusal on any noteworthy finds.

GALENO, MISSIONARY

Galeno is twenty-six years old and does not remember much about where he grew up, not more than the dust from the sterile soils and the daily hunts for clean water. And the refugee camp at Yndaros was not much more uplifting, especially not after his father died from consumption and his mother abandoned him for a new man with cold eyes and the dreams of a fortune-hunter. He was taken into the care of a charitable sun priest who sent him to the convent school where he was taught to revere Prios, the One.

Galeno studied diligently. He read anything he came across, searching for phrases resounding with the charity of his adoptive father. But he never found anything but rules as cold as the mother-thief's eyes, passages arguing that might is right and all-encompassing demands for an unconditional, self-destructive worship of the One. Then he heard about Father Sarvola ...

Two months later he had left Yndaros and resumed his studies at the missionary station in Thistle Hold, determined to spread the love of Prios to illiterate goblins as well as to those hunting for fortunes in bottles of blackbrew. So far he has not received much more than a handful of beatings in return, but he will never give up. His dream is to journey far into the woods, and to find one of the many goblin tribes dwelling there, naturally in the hope of converting them to followers of Prios. As soon as he has found a suitable escort he is off.

Gaining Entry to the Hold

In order to pass through the palisade you have to carry of a bill of passage and the copper, silver or gold signet ring with which the pass has been stamped. All who travel in and out for work are given rings of copper – something which has graced them with the disdainful nickname Coppers. The residents are awarded rings of silver but may choose to upgrade them to gold rings, with or without ornamentations.

If you are willing to accept the risk it is possible to acquire forgeries among the tents of Blackmoor or at the Karabbadokks. And if that does not seem tempting you can instead rent or buy a ring plus bill of passage from some shift-worker who is willing to part with it. Other than that the only, and possibly less risky, way to enter the Hold is to pay the fee. The base price is 1 shilling per leg or wheel that passes through the gate – in other words 2 shillings for a man on foot, 4 shillings for a man toeing a cart with two wheels, 6 shillings for a rider and his horse and 1 shilling for a one-legged war veteran (provided that he is not riding a trolley). Furthermore, anyone who has come to Thistle Hold to do business must be prepared to declare his wares and pay a tenth of their market value in tax.

VALLOMEI DEREGO, NOBLE

Many young nobles fantasize about Yndaros and the court, but not all of them. One of those who would rather seek adventure than intrigues is Vallomei Derego, the fourth son of baron Valtos. Like other noble youngsters he has more riches than judgment and a mouth bigger than his courage, which is why he has spent the better part of three years talking about and preparing for the perfect expedition. Equipment has been bought, a cartographer has helped him to draw a map and the archives at Mother Mehira's agency have been scrutinized for the perfect band of companions.

The target of his planned journey is of course Symbar; he wants to become famous for being the one who found a safe passage to the legendary palace of the last Symbarian emperor. Everything is set for departure, except for one last detail: the choice of an escort. Vallomei has such low regard for "common people" that he has a hard time finding someone he can trust. But as soon as that happens, as soon as he comes across a group of persons that makes him feel at ease, the trip towards the beating heart of Davokar will commence.

URFONS, SELLSWORD

Two years old, while searching for berries in the outskirts of Davokar, the goblin Urfons happened upon a hunter who had been torn asunder by a forest beast. By the cadaver remained the hunter's sword.

Urfons hid his find under the moss and returned to it day after day to admire and polish the shiny, sharp-edged weapon.

As he grew strong enough to wield it he spent several hours each day fighting against imaginary enemies, stones and bushes. And even though he never learned any special technique, he became more and more skilled at trailing and utilizing the weight of the weapon in a kind of raging, twirling sword-dance.

Urfons is big and strong for a goblin, and has matured into one of Mother Mehira's most experienced sellswords. He may not be as skilled as the legendary war veteran Serex Attio or the axe-wielding warmaiden Vanoya Skullsplitter, but on the other hand he is neither an alcoholic nor especially touchy. What more is, Urfons has actually survived a handful of expeditions to mythic locations far past the brighter parts of Davokar. He can easily find his way back if someone would pay him for guidance to the Columns of Haganor or the Cave Town of Keruan.

PELLIO, TOWN WATCHMAN

Tormented by memories of confrontations with the hordes of the Dark Lords, Pellio accompanied the first detachment to abandon the south. He took part in the short siege of the village of Kadizar and was thereafter commanded to patrol its walls. In order to scatter his thoughts he started playing dice and soon he owed a small fortune to persons who would rather make use of his skills than demand reimbursements. Pellio became an expert at handling all sorts of shady deals – from extortion and exactions, to smuggling, to outright acts of violence.

Three years ago the fifty-year-old veteran resigned from the army and moved to Thistle Hold where he applied for a position in the town watch. The controlled environment is more or less made for a man of Pellio's talents. He is careful not to get involved in anything too risky, but no one has safer smuggle routes in and out of the Hold than he and no one has him beat when it comes to procuring sensitive objects or substances. If you need anything done in Thistle Hold, turn to Pellio!

Areas of Conflict

COMPARED TO THE TEEMING and chaotic Yndaros, Thistle Hold may be perceived as an oasis of peace and tranquility. The intention of its Mayor has always been that he who pays for stepping through the gates has earned himself a pleasurable stay; a logic that he also applies to himself. Troublemakers and potential insurgents are caught early on and banished from the Hold, with the possible exception of a few who can display honest regrets and a generous gift to compensate for the problems they have caused. Sure, it can get wild at nights – drinking and brawling is tolerated by the town watch, at least in the taverns surrounding the Toad's Square. But all threats to the "public order" are harshly dealt with. That is, if they are detected ...

Not more than eight years after its founding, cracks have appeared in the wooden wall, literally as well as figuratively. The system of rings and bills of passage meant to control who passes in and out through the gates has its weaknesses, since the articles can be both forged and stolen. Furthermore, a handful of corrupt watchmen have been exposed over the years and a number of more or less successful attempts to tunnel under the palisade revealed.

In the more figurative sense, there are powers within the walls whose gratitude towards Mayor Nightpitch's generous achievements have declined considerably. There are many who stress that the price you have to pay for the relative safety of Thistle Hold is way too high, or that the wages paid for services rendered are way too low. Others do their best to avoid taxes and tolls, either by making trades in secret or by moving their business to Blackmoor. And adding to this is a long list of feuds between families or individuals, some of them dating back to the time of The Great War – feuds causing the allegedly well-oiled clockwork that is Thistle Hold to squeak and rattle.

This section describes a handful of conflicts that may be considered typical for Thistle Hold. They can of course be used as a basis for creating adventures, but are also meant to serve the purpose of expanding the portrayal of the region and its people.

GRUMBLING GOBLINS

Ever since the Karabbadokks were invited by Lasifor Nightpitch to leave the woods and establish a settlement east of Thistle Hold, the tribe has been characterized by its self-selected submissiveness. The tribe's chief, Idelfons, regards himself as a very close friend of Mayor Nightpitch, and is deeply humbled by being allowed to serve such a noble man's ambitions – a notion which is strengthened by the numerous and lavish gifts he receives from his friend.

But there is a growing mass of younger goblins that refuse to be content with getting nothing but scraps from Lasifor's table. With the hothead Ugtuls as their frontrunner, they claim that the proud

Haloban's Ring is the street that delimits the block surrounding the Toad's Square from the rest of the town. To cross it at night can be a mistake.

history of Karabbadokk is sullied by its current slave-like status. And when the intoxicants are flowing they are heard yelling about everything from boycotting work to armed takeovers of the Hold. Idelfons ignores Ugtuls, thinking he is nothing but a harmless bully. Only the informal leader of the village, Garm Wormwriggler, senses the gravity of the situation and tries to pour oil on the troubled waters. The question is how long it will take before the oil catches fire...

FRIENDS OF THE FOREST

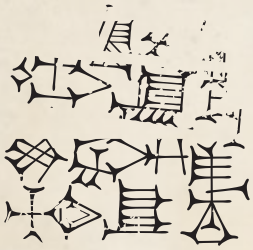
That the subjects of Queen Korinthia are charmed by the wild might of Davokar is not as uncommon as one might think. One flagrant example was exposed the other year when the authorities caught up with a secret society called the Jakaars – led by a novice of the Order named Hurelia and consisting of about twenty individuals who only have one thing in common: an abhorrence of how their fellow countrymen were treating the forest.

The Jakaars were no cult; they were in no way allied to the dark and corrupt forces of Davokar. But they were far from toothless. Up to the point of their capture they had only carried out a few minor attacks, but they had plans to cause problems for everyone exploiting the woods as well as those who trade in the loot of treasure-hunters and explorers. One might wonder just how they were hoping to accomplish this without attracting suspicions from witchhunters or becoming directly involved in occult activities.

UNHEALTHY STIMULANTS

The vegetation of Davokar can have the most astonishing properties and to consume even the smallest seed can have devastating effects – just ask the explorer Lupina who literally was torn apart from inside by a Bellycreeper that had rooted itself in her throat. Some herbs have both positive and negative effects and there will always be gamblers willing to pay a high price for accelerated muscle growth, enhanced night vision, a rosy complexion or sensations of ecstasy – even if the cost is murderous rage, blood thirst or lifelong addiction.

There are of course also people exploiting the situation to make money. In most cases not even the venders know exactly what long-term effects are incurred from consuming their "medicaments"; sometimes they just ignore any side-effects and keep their trade to the shadows – as for instance the masked "Miracle Master" who periodically is seen in both Yndaros and the Hold, marketing his joy-inducing medicures.



The so-called Crypt Writings, with their strange letters, have raised the question of whether the old Symbaric language contained more than one alphabet.

THE APOSTATE SARVOLA

According to the Curia, the governing body of the Sun Church, Father Sarvola is a heretic spreading false doctrines and dragging the sublime name of Prios in the dung of the gutters. The problem is that very few others seem to worry about the doings of the apostate. On the contrary, many silently approve of his missionary activities among goblin scum and barbarians, as well as his appeals for generosity, love and brotherhood. In short: so long as the Queen, Lasifor Nightpitch, Grand Master Seldonio and other influential individuals accept the activities of Sarvola, there is not much the Curia can do. At least not in the open.

THE GROWTH OF BLACKMOOR

Blackmoor is growing. It was once a small camp site but now the tents are spread far and wide over the dark soil, and can during the summers accommodate more people than the Hold itself. The land is owned by the House Erebus, headed by baron Grafoldo who welcomes the transformation. His family earns a great deal on rents and taxes from the stores, guest houses, artisans and eateries that make out a small village core by the highroad. The earnings are in fact so good that the baron has hired a guard – the mercenary outfit called the Blood Robes – to keep some kind of order in the camp. He has also sent a petition to the Queen, asking her to allow for permanent homes to be built on the land.

Grafoldo Erebus and the most prominent entrepreneurs in Blackmoor work hard to get the petition approved, but they are struggling against the wind. Among the opponents are Lasifor Nightpitch in alliance with the House Argona, but also lots of merchants who have reasons for wanting the trade in loot and artifacts to be conducted in the controlled environment of the Hold. On their side they really only have the Sun Church, partly because the priests regard Blackmoor as a breeding ground for depravity, partly because they want to punish Mayor Nightpitch for housing a barbarian witch and the heretic Sarvola.

TROUBLE AT THE ANTIQUE PLAZA

As a collective, the merchants are the most powerful faction in Thistle Hold, and among them the antique dealers comprise the elite. Consequently, intrigues equal to those found among the nobles in Yndaros are found in and around the marketplaces in the Hold.

When it is rumored that a successful expedition is on its way back to town, it all breaks loose. Merchants do their best to gain an advantage, resorting to anything from smearing opponents to robbing them blind; at times even kidnappings or murders take place. And for the happy one who manages to secure the vending rights the troubles are far from over, as rivals will do everything in their power to sabotage sales.

The Player Characters in Thistle Hold

AS PREVIOUSLY STATED, Thistle Hold will probably be the place from which the player characters embark on their expeditions and to where they (hopefully) return. But never forget that the Hold makes an interesting setting on its own! The town of Mayor Nightpitch is teeming with conspiracies, secrets and interesting individuals, just waiting to be addressed by the player characters.

HOUSING

When you have made it through the gates you should not have a difficult time finding a place to spend the night. Ever since Blackmoor became a viable option for many treasure-hunters, there are often affordable rooms for hire at the Ruin, the Witch and Familiar and the Rose Garden. It is also both possible and cheap to rent a bed in some private households or in the barrack at the Garrison which is only used in times of trouble, when the town watch expands its numbers by hiring mercenaries.

Acquiring permanent lodging in Thistle Hold is a costly affair, but it is of course possible to buy houses as well as apartments, from private owners or from the Mayor. Concerning the latter, there is no room for any new buildings to be built, so the homes for sale are always ones which have been confiscated from some evicted or dead previous owner.

Another option is to lease a home from some landlord who has moved or is out traveling. But that often amounts to a higher cost than buying, since a fee for "permanent residency" is added, paid directly to the Mayor. However, lately many have chosen that alternative despite it being more expensive. The reason for this is the continuous growth of Blackmoor – the risk is that the prices on houses in the Hold will decline considerably if the tent camp is approved for permanent housing by the Queen.

EQUIPMENT

Everything needed for mounting an expedition into Davokar can be bought in the Hold. The general store Marvalom's specializes in equipment for treasure-hunters and explorers but can keep prices

that are about 20 percent above normal because of its legendary status. Within the walls there are also Marvalom's competitor the Rope and Axe and the discount market in the Queen's Square, where brand new objects share tables with secondhand items.

If you are looking for a real bargain you should visit Blackmoor, in particular the Marketplace or the store called Kodomar's Huckery. But the noise, crowds and criminal elements of the tent camp are avoided by most, especially when taking the varying quality of the wares into account. In Blackmoor you can pay less than nothing for a masterly crafted item one day, and wind up paying a fortune the next for a pickaxe made from porous bog iron.

MISSIONS TO PERFORM

One who is fairly capable and is seeking to earn money on adventurous tasks does not have to stay unemployed for long in Thistle Hold. The town is full of fortune-hunters and merchants in need of company, who can offer cash payment or shares in future earnings to interested parties. The destination may be a colony, a nest of free settlers or a barbarian camp site but most often the road leads to the alluring ruins of Symbaroum. And the person or group that is unwilling to follow the orders of some taskmaster is always free to map out their own goals. In the taverns by the Toad's Square anyone can listen to stories about promising hunting grounds, ask around for directions or even pay for more or less reliable maps to places like Saroklaw, Black Pitch Mire, Jerak or Symbar itself.

Once you have proven what you are made of it might be time to contact Mother Mehira, hoping to get enrolled among her agents. If one succeeds in that, one has a great chance of being hired by more prominent employers, such as Ordo Magica, the Sun Church, wealthy merchants, adventurous nobles or ever representatives of the Queen. For instance, Mother Mehira was honored with the task of assembling an escort to accompany Arch Duchess Esmerelda, the Queen's half-sister, on a trip to Karvosti. It is said that Serex Attio completely pulverized the furnishing of the Witch and Familiar when he was excluded because of his unruly temper.

Job opportunities can also be found inside the palisade. A group of adventurers can take jobs on the lawful side, for instance as night guards in some antique dealer's warehouse or as bouncers in one of the taverns by the Toad's Square. They can be paid to find stolen objects, missing persons, elusive criminals, groups of rioters and cultists, or the unhealthy source behind a mysterious disease. But a word to the wise: irrespective of what one does, one must tread with greater care in the Hold than in Yndaros and other Ambrian cities – at least as long as one has not been given the assignment by Mayor Nightpitch or one of the captains of the town watch. Thistle Hold is a small town, where everyone knows everyone, where everything is seen or heard by someone and where the authorities are anxious to preserve law and order. Stealthy maneuvers, assassinations, diplomacy and shrewdness are always preferable to rampaging through the streets!

Of course, the lawful side also has its darker counterpart. It is far from unusual that those who are up to no good put their trust in newcomers and non-residents. A skilled and unscrupulous group of adventurers can get lots of assignments which involve stealing things (antiquities, treasure maps, journals and so on); sabotaging buildings or objects; or acting as middlemen in shady deals. And it probably goes without saying that he who paws about on the wrong side of the law must be doubly careful in Thistle Hold.

Table 3: The Cost for lodging in Thistle Hold

QUALITY	EXAMPLE	1 NIGHT	1 WEEK	1 MONTH	OWNERSHIP
Exclusive	The Court and Harp, The Winged Ladle	1 thaler	—	—	—
Fine	The Seamstress' Rest, The Ruin	2 shillings	1 thaler	4 thaler	—
Ordinary	The Witch and Familiar, Arkerio's	1 shilling	5 shillings	2 thaler	—
Simple	The Rose Garden, The Barrack	5 ortegs	2 shillings	1 thaler	—
Rent nice	Three rooms at the Antique Plaza	—	2 thaler	10 thaler	—
Rent ordinary	Three rooms at the West Gate	—	1 thaler	4 thaler	—
Rent simple	One room east of the Toad's Square	—	5 shillings	2 thaler	—
Buy nice	Three rooms at the Antique Plaza	—	—	—	500 thaler
Buy ordinary	Three rooms at the West Gate	—	—	—	300 thaler
Buy simple	One room east of the Toad's Square	—	—	—	100 thaler

Yndaros

NINE YEARS OF TOILING *in the Marshes and my body was spent. I returned just the other day, as the sun climbed over the Ravens and the mists danced along the surface of River Doudram. I couldn't believe my eyes; I felt like a stranger.*

Sure, I recognized the scaffoldings, the crowds and the sounds of voices mingled with treading shoes, boots and hooves. What amazed me was instead all that had sprouted from the racket – the pillars at the harbor basin, the dome of the Cathedral of Martyrs, not to mention the marvelous palace of our Queen. And there was more. The pavement on the streets, the four-story buildings lining the streets, the statues on the squares, the convent school that I found where my favorite tavern used to be. But let's return to your question ...

I am lying here bleeding because I have been, successively, stoned, stabbed, whipped, beaten and finally stabbed again. I was stoned at midnight as I happened to end up in the middle of a stand-off between two groups of fancy but remarkably brutal dwarves. I received a stabbing in response when I asked one of the dwarves for mercy, and was later whipped by a drunken witch-hunter who mistook me for a blight beast. The witchhunter chased me all the way to Old Kadizar where I stumbled upon of a trio of goblins who beat down on me smiling. And the final cut came from someone I misidentified as a little girl. I thought she was going to help me, but then she searched my pockets and stabbed me in disappointment when they turned out to be empty.

That being said, I would truly appreciate if you could stop smirking, walk away and let me die in p...

Background

YNDAROS IS BUILT on the well preserved ruins of the city-state Lindaros. Regarding the latter not much more is known than what has been told by the barbarians – the contact between Alberetor and Lindaros was never developed because of the great barrier called the Titans. The general belief is that the city-state was ruined about two centuries ago when a terrible epidemic wiped out its population. It is also said that the fate of the Lindarians was self-inflicted; that the scourge was sent from Higher Powers, as punishment for their arrogant and slothful ways.

The ruins of Lindaros were for a long time shunned and feared by the people still living in the area. But as the Ambrians arrived at the shores of the Doudram they were greeted by a walled, barbarian village situated inside the ruined city. After a short siege and an even shorter parley, the chieftain of Kadizar agreed to surrender and to dissolve his clan. In return he was awarded the title Baron Manvar Grendel, and was given a piece of land to govern. The oldest daughter of the newly appointed baron refused to submit herself to the rule of the intruders and eloped to the mountains along with two hundred Kadizans. The rest of the clan folk stayed and were soon put to work by the new lords of the land.

Thanks to thousands of prisoners of war, Lindaros was rapidly transformed into the new high seat of Queen Korinthia. When she arrived with her court, seven years after the forerunners, a respectable palace was already waiting for her, and the basic structure of streets and city blocks was also in place. With her arrival the development gained momentum. The palace was remodeled and expanded; lots of buildings were demolished to leave room for bigger and more beautiful ones; parks and squares were established, most of them crowned with pompous monuments; grandiose constructions like the Cathedral of Martyrs, the Dome and the harbor basin were based on foundations of old Lindaros and could be finished in a matter of years.

Fourteen years have now passed since the arrival of the Queen and the city keeps growing in a way which many deem to be unsustainable.

Morning mists dancing on River Doudram, embeding the Harbour District in a misty haze and welling up the slope towards the Queen's palace.

According to estimates about 100.000 people call the capital their home, but many of them live under harsh conditions within the walls of old Kadizar or in the refugee camp southeast of there. And the immigrants keep coming; lots of people arrive on a daily basis from the dying south. Some have been invited because of their special skills or thanks to siblings already there, other are hopefuls lured by the inflated rumors of Yndaros' splendor. And even if many are referred to colonies in the west or to work at the edge of Davokar, one may wonder if, and for how long, the authorities will be able to maintain some kind of order.

Overview

THE AMBRIAN CAPITAL Yndaros is situated about three days' march north of the Titans, a short distance west of where River Noora blends with the mighty Doudram. The city provides a sample of the kingdom at large: in Yndaros you will find the war-related, the learned, the commercial and the cultured mixed up with barbarians, goblins and a growing horde of impoverished refugees.

It should also be mentioned that Yndaros is a construction site. Constructions are underway all over, and it is not unusual for relatively new buildings to be torn down in order to make room for newer and more functional ones.

Symbaroum & Lindaros

The Ambrians have limited knowledge about the civilizations that previously ruled the region. But if one is to believe the barbarians, Symbaroum and Lindaros are somehow related or at least connected. According to their legends, the latter was established when some of the clans opted to settled down, at about the same time as the other clans united under a High Chieftain to combat the horrors of Davokar. But as is the case with myths and legends, the truth is far from established. The connection between the two is often the topic of lively debates in taverns visited by Ordo Magica's novices and adepts.

The Dance Academy

When the Dark Lords were vanquished, a group of dancers were liberated from their stronghold. The dancers asked to follow Korinthia's troops back to Alberetor, and today the big craze among Ambria's nobles is to be seduced by eastern dance magic. The easterners share a building in the Palace District with the court dancers of the Queen – a company of arrogant ballerinas that have a hard time accepting the success of the newcomers. They claim that the performance of the former prisoners lacks artistic depth, that the "dancers" exhibit a total lack of physical discipline and that they basically are engaged in fraudulent nonsense.

If you approach the capital by freighter along the Doudram, you will probably disembark at the cargo dock in the east. From there you may crisscross your way south between the warehouses, in which case you will reach the slummy neighborhood inhabited by the city's many hardworking laborers – construction workers, maids, servants, dock workers and so on. And should you continue further south, you would end up among the tents, huts and wagons of the refugee camp.

Had you instead turned westward at the Cargo Port's marketplace, called the Monger's Square, you would have passed through the wall of Old Kadizar. The city block is composed of a combination of Lindaros' ruins and barbarian clay houses, also mixed up with a few remnants of ancient Symbaroum. The population is similar to the one occupying the laborer's quarters, possibly with the difference that the criminal elements are more noticeable.

When stepping through the western gate of Old Kadizar you are greeted by the sounds from the Harbor District. The port at the center of the city is nowadays mostly used for transporting passengers to the village Beren's Berth on the Doudram's northern shore. The warehouses that once stood by the docks have been replaced by taverns, dives and other establishments for pleasure and relaxation.

Gazing south when standing by the harbor basin you can see Korinthia's palace reach for the skies, and you also get a glimpse of the Artisan's District which continues west of the Harbor District. The most skilled craftsmen, or at least the most renowned, have their shops between the harbor and the palace, while those set up in the west must work harder, both in order to produce high quality wares and to entice customers.

North of the westernmost artisan's quarter is a shabby district that so far is the domain of the city's more or less successful artists. If you instead walk further to the south you will soon find yourself in Yndaros' finest district. Here the grand Cathedral of Martyrs lies a short walk from the Triple Towers of Ordo Magica and, in another direction, the Convent School of the Last Light. By the wall which surrounds the Palace District you also find the well-guarded residences and guesthouses where the lords and ladies of the realm stay when visiting the capital.

Regarding the atmosphere in Yndaros, one could describe the city as being in a constant state of commanded euphoria. The people celebrate their victorious past, their glorious future and not least their beloved sovereign. One day a week is dedicated to festivities, parades and spectacles staged as a reminder of important incidents during the War, or meant to demonstrate the Ambrian superiority over barbarians and the new homeland. But underneath the joyous surface are both the great sorrow over all things lost and a great many problems that need to be handled. Many hunger. Most people are forced to work extremely hard and under grim conditions, in the city or as serfs on the estates surrounding it. A vast majority of the refugees are perceived as being unreliable or useless, and are kept in check with alms and a harsh city watch. Adding to that are the intrigues and schemes characterizing the dealings among the noble houses.

Yndaros is a city of great contrasts, and just like the newly constructed buildings along the muddy banks of the Doudram she is constantly balancing on the verge of total collapse.

THE PALACE DISTRICT

The palace with its pavilions, parks and barracks is located in the southern part of the capital, and is completely based on foundations from old Lindaros. It is placed on a wide hilltop surrounded by a polished, and nowadays somewhat eroded, stone wall; a hill that likely harbored the lords of the dead city-state two centuries ago.

Aside from the sequentially remodeled palace with its sky high central tower there are lots of other buildings inside the wall. The dukes and duchesses share two pavilions, one of which also is the permanent residence of the sickly mother of the Queen. The Queen's Guard, the Pansars, has its barracks close to the Palace Park with its sculptures and encaged beasts. Close by is also the highly appreciated Triumph Theatre, housing an ensemble of actors, a male choir and two dance companies.

Finally, the residence of the Key Master must be mentioned. Since four years ago, it is the beloved Herakleo Attio who runs the city administration.

Many would say that his fierceness, made evident in the expansion and harsher methods of the city's reformatory, would never have been tolerated if he were not such a celebrated and adored war hero.

THE HARBOR DISTRICT

Initially it was a place for unloading incoming construction materials, but nowadays the Harbor District has turned into Yndaros' center for amusements, pleasure and relaxation. Taverns like the Victory Vault, Ynedar's Legacy and the Town Hall's Loft provide food and beverages, often accompanied by bards playing and singing. And if you would rather skip eating there are places like the wine house Tuvinel's, the cider mill Bego's Basement or The Savage that exclusively serves variations of the barbarian Blackbrew. For thrill-seekers there are also dives like The Fortune Smithy and The Lucky Charm down by the waterfront, or why not The Steel Glove located in the bohemian quarter where the prize fights keep going all night long – at least until its grand master, the ogre Bigpaw, has stepped into the ring and clubbed down anyone drunk enough to take the challenge.

But not everything is drunkenness and debauchery. The fuming Steam Bath down by the dock can accommodate high as well as low in separate rooms; from the circular balconies of the Vivisectory visitors can observe the masters of Ordo Magica cut open anything from strange seedpods to huge spiders, corrupted beasts and even goblins; in the five-story building housing the Legacy Gallery it is free for anyone to behold artworks and listen to bards praising the glorious past of the Ambrian people and the lost splendor of Alberetor. And one should not disregard the pillories and the executioner's podium at the Triumph Plaza, the latter featuring both gallows and a stand where nobler criminals are beheaded.

Aside from all things mentioned above, it is of course possible to board ships in the harbor basin. Queen Korinthia has a galley with twelve oar pairs down by a well-guarded berth, next to the smaller rowboats which carry prominent residents to the extravagant pleasure palace on the Islet – for a night of good food, exclusive company and first-class spectacles. Furthermore, a ferry-route journeys between the harbor and the village of Beren's Berth on the northern shores of the Doudram, from Yndaros at each even stroke of the clock and back at the odd ones.

THE ARTISANS DISTRICT

The capital's many craftsmen mainly keep to four city blocks – two directly below the Palace District, and two west of the harbor basin. The competition is deadly due to the fact that most of the artisans who previously were scattered over Alberetor now have assembled in Yndaros. And the situation is hardly improved when the craftsmen get additional competitors in the form of migrating barbarians and, in some areas, goblins.

In Year 19, hoping to address the many conflicts and feuds caused by the surplus, the Queen dictated that a guild system should be installed, much like the one that already existed within Ordo Magica. The idea was that bricklayers, blacksmiths, brewers, tailors, potters and so on should get organized in systems of novices, adepts and masters, based on the skill of each individual. Since then the struggle for the master and grandmaster seals has been bloody, actually so bloody that many of the survivors have chosen to move elsewhere – two factors that have finally led to a relative calm settling in.

Then again, there is another storm cloud hovering over the neighborhood. During year 13 the first of a dozen dwarven families arrived, asking

The Eternal Executioner

About ten years ago a giant, mask-wearing man presented himself at the palace gates and asked to be allowed before the Queen. After many ifs and buts (and a whole lot of bloodshed) his wish was granted, and he offered Korinthia his service as executioner in Yndaros. Nobody knows where he came from or who he is, but he calls himself Ripe and his enormous two-handed blade has become the informal symbol for law and justice in the new realm.

He is seldom seen except when performing his services – executing wrongdoers at the Triumph Plaza. But when he is, everything around comes to a halt – people stop to stare, conversations fall silent and those standing in his way hurry sideways. Ripe instills fear with his mere presence, and the capital's bards and storytellers are happily adding to the mystery, sometimes describing him as an unusually clever arch troll, sometimes portraying him as an equal to creatures like Aloéna on Karvosti. But no matter what people believe, they are all asking themselves what will happen when the Eternal Executioner has quenched the yearnings of his bloodthirsty blade.

The Brew Vandals

Even if a majority of Queen Korinthia's subjects regard barbarians and their traditions as uncivilized and despicable, there are some customs which have taken root. A huge group of youngsters in the Labor Districts have started to make use of barbarian intoxicants, in particular the beverage called Blackbrew and various mushrooms. These Brew Vandals sometimes get so stewed that they move through the streets like a laughing wave of destruction and random violence, causing dismay and fear among more respectable residents.

permission to settle in the city. As they could pay their way and possibly develop into a valuable contact between Ambria and the secluded kingdom of Küam Zamok, they were warmly welcomed and made their homes in the Artisans District.

However, it has become more and more apparent that the families are feuding and that they are not capable of, or are uninterested in, performing any crafts. Instead they have by various methods acquired a long list of businesses – taverns, warehouses, dives and so on – that they now manage. The rumors about what they are up to, why they oppose one another and gather in large groups that clash in brutal fights are numerous; as many as the connections made between the dwarves and various criminal deeds in the western districts of Yndaros. But even if their activities have started to spread to adjacent parts of the city, the authorities do nothing – another strange fact which gives rise to wild speculations.

THE TEMPLE DISTRICT

The blocks west of the palace are commonly called the Temple District, even though they contain much more than the Sun Church's majestic shrine. The Cathedral of Martyrs is without a doubt the area's most prominent landmark. But one who closes in on Yndaros from the south or by ship along the Doudram also sees the three spires of Ordo Magica's tower and the guesthouse Kohinoor's roof rise higher than surrounding buildings. Here the buildings generally stand further apart than in the rest of the city, most of them being surrounded by an open space, stone paved or covered with trimmed grass. For instance, the Convent School of the Last Light is situated on a walled plot, big enough to include housing facilities and a temple with room for about one hundred visitors, aside from the school itself.

Nearest to the palace wall is a fenced-in neighborhood, inhabited by the most prominent people in the realm. A huge force of armed guards, led by the retired hero-general Seraon Patio, makes sure that no trespassers make their way to the private residences. Here prosper the city's wealthiest individuals – the merchant Master Hurian, the Islet's proprietor Elindra Aroma, the patron Laguboi Galeia and many more. Other estates are owned by the noble houses and are only in use when their representatives have errands in the capital. Finally, there are some other noteworthy houses: the fabulous tavern Brother Humlu's, the copy of Nighthome built by the Mayor of Thistle Hold and the fortress-like residence recently constructed by Artek Valotzar, the head of what appears to be the most successful dwarven family.

OLD KADIZAR

The barbarian village of Kadizar was established about a century ago, by the clan Kadiz which had made an enemy of the Jezites – the region's most powerful force back then. Searching for a safe haven, they dared to challenge the taboos and entered the abandoned city-state, where they soon settled down and built a claystone wall for further protection. The location they selected lay close to the waters of River Doudram and included an ancient tower-ruin to function as a lookout for keeping an eye on the enemy up north.

The twenty-foot-high bailey is still standing, and within it is still a mixture of Kadizian claystone houses, Lindarian buildings and a few ruins from the time of Symbaroum. Before the arrival of the Ambrians the old tower ruin was the residence of the chieftain, but since then its sections have been divided between different occupants – the local headquarters of the city watch composes one section, while the informal leader of Old Kadizar, the thief king Nobleman Dastan, resides in the remodeled tower itself. Beneath the complex a widely debated excavation is taking place, organized by Ordo Magica. If they have found anything noteworthy, the excavation leader, Master Marbela, has managed to keep it a secret.

Today the overcrowded Old Kadizar has about four thousand inhabitants, a majority of which only survive thanks to alms, day-laboring and begging in the streets. The jobs available are often burdensome, dangerous and smelly: the city's tannery lies within the wall, as well as the headquarters of the sewer workers and the guild of the blacksmiths. Of course, the leaders among the tanners, the "sewer rats" and the blacksmiths have a lot of power and influence in Old Kadizar, just like the proprietor of the claystone plant, Lord Manselm.

Many of the inhabitants choose to lead a criminal life, too proud or too greedy to settle for the meager outcome of honest labor. Because of that, an informal power structure has emerged, with Nobleman Dastan on top. It is said that he has made a fortune from organized begging, pickpocketing, renting out manpower and so on. And he is of course as determined to oppose any rebellious tendencies as the city watch has ever been.

THE CARGO DOCKS

East of Old Kadizar's bailey are the docks that nowadays are used for shipping cargo to and from Ravenia in the north, Agrella in the west and Mergile in the east. South of the dockyard's warehouses lays the most shabby laborer's quarter in Yndaros, not much more than an unstructured

gathering of sheds and hovels. All buildings from the time of Lindaros are gone – officially razed to be salvaged for materials needed when reconstructing the Palace District; according to rumors demolished because the authorities did not want refugees and peasants living in easily defended stone buildings. If you trail the bailey around to the south, you will find finer living quarters for laborers and simple folk. These quarters have been allowed to keep their stone structures and they grow increasingly pleasant the closer you get to the city center.

Pleasant or not, it is in these blocks that you find the discontented and rebellious. In Old Kadizar all rebellious tendencies are kept in check by Nobleman Dastan and the city watch, but outside the wall it is harder to maintain control. The dock workers, domestics, builders, coachmen and so on are right to claim that they are awarded far too little in exchange for their hard work. At the same time they have to suffer the effects of a continuously expanding refugee camp – destitute, hungering men and women that are prepared to do anything and for an even smaller salary.

If the population were not so divided into various subgroups fighting each other, the situation would most likely be drastically different. But as it is, you will find the stevedore Krepano argue for the rights of all Ambrians, the leather seamstress Yahela argue for the barbarians, the day laborer Ulofin for the goblins and unemployed Feora for the rights of the newly immigrated. The one voice that seems to be shouting for the sake of all impoverished is the one rising from the criers of an organization called The Torch. Nobody knows who is financing the operation or who writes the biased news announced by the Torch's boys and girls – apparently not even the children themselves.

THE REFUGEE CAMP

The Refugee Camp stretches out south of the Cargo Docks and east of the patch of forest surrounding the gladiator stadium called the Dome. Just as in the

1. The Cathedral of Martyrs
2. The Triplet-Towers of Ordo Magica
3. The Tower Ruin
4. Fortress Doudram
5. The Palace
6. The Palace Park
7. The Legacy Gallery
8. The Steam Bath
9. The Executioner's Podium
10. Brother Humlu's
11. Warehouses
12. Sheds/tents
13. The Dome

Cargo Dock District all remnants of old Lindaros have been razed to the ground, which leaves the dwellers no other shelter than tents, wagons and the occasional shed. It is hardly an overstatement to claim that the 20.000 people living in the camp were expecting something quite different when they came through the Titans. Before leaving, most of them even led a tolerable life in the parts of Alberetor that still had some life in them.

Fortunately, the Queen and other prominent residents seem to realize that the situation would get out of hand if the refugees were not only homeless and impoverished but also starving. Soup kitchens can be found here and there among the tents, bread is distributed and some days the children are even treated to so-called Sugar Showers.

On the other hand, the food and the sweets are not much more effective than a poultice on a cracked skull. Those who have the stamina and a glimmer of hope take whatever kind of job they can get, no matter how heavy or dangerous, not least in order to afford themselves a cheap jug of Brutebrew for comfort. Their highest wish is to be selected to climb into one of the wagons that several times a week arrive from country estates and border colonies, searching for capable workers.

The city watch is of course always present in the camp, and its patrols are often accompanied by a Black Cloak and one or more young Pansars. It has indeed been known to happen that barbarian rebels and organized criminals have used the refugee camp as a base of operations in Yndaros. The patrols have a deterring effect when it comes to petty crimes like thefts and abuse but the refugees still live in constant fear, not least due to all rumors circling the camp – rumors of murderous

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... such is the blight beast: born of flesh, twisted by sins lingering in water and soil and shimmering air; the sin of Symbar embodied, that is the blight beast."

rebel leaders, occult sacrificial rites, bloodthirsty abominations in human form and the kidnapping sprees of slave traders; rumors which seem all the more real when the inhabitants of the camp have a tendency to vanish without a trace, sometimes several people per night.

FORTRESS DOUDRAM

Yndaros is not surrounded by a bailey and the relatively low walls of the Palace District would hardly stop a hostile army from reaching the heart of the realm. At the moment there seems to be no serious threat against the Queen but such things can change, for instance if the High Chieftain rallied the clans and also joined ranks with the elves. And for that reason a great fortress went into construction four years ago, placed on a cliff in the mighty Doudram west of the city – meant to be a safe haven for the court and the city's most prominent residents.

Fortress Doudram will be fully finished within a year and is already in use as the headquarters of the Pansars, guards to the Queen and also the army's heavy infantry unit. The fortress is under the supervision of Seneschal Bartho who, in turn, obeys the commander of the Pansars, General Jomilo. About two hundred fifty soldiers are stationed at the fortress while fifty stay in the Palace district, patrolling the palace, acting as bodyguards for dignitaries or keeping order in the refugee camp.

SURROUNDINGS

Yndaros and the lands surrounding it belong to the Grand Duchy of Korinthia, called Yndarien. Count Demetro Vearra governs the land west of the capital, Count Edogai Brigo the land to the east, while the Queen herself has direct control over a vast area to the south. About a dozen towns and villages lay within a day's ride from the city, the biggest ones being New Vearra and Brigo's Bridge close to the estates of the counts.

Most notable among the villages are Prios Pass and Dekadena. The former is located where the mountain road from Alberetor reaches the lowlands and traverses River Veloma. Aside from its inhabitants working closely with the nearby monastery of the Twilight Friars, Prios Pass has developed into a border crossing, where refugees from Alberetor have to register before traveling further into the Promised Land. While waiting for the certificate declaring them to be healthy and suitable for work and lodging in the Queen's realm the immigrants all live in a huge camp south of the river. Others try to avoid passing through the village or make attempts to bribe their way to swift passage and a signed certificate, adding to the workload of the Ranger border patrols. The rangers stay fully occupied rooting out corruption and chasing after those who are denied entry to Ambria but still try to find a way into the Promised Land.

Dekadena, high seat of the Barony of New Dekanor located in the southeast, is another story. Late in the spring of Year 20, Baron Mergai declared himself independent and appointed himself King – something which happened after Korinthia had publicly ordered him to build a sun temple in Dekadena. The baron refused, accusing the Queen and the First Father of wrongfully exalting Prios at the expense of all other gods. The Sun Church immediately threatened to brand him a heretic and a servant of the Dark Lords, but an overwhelming majority of Baron Mergai's subjects appeared to welcome and revere their new "king". Adding to that, a slight increase in people migrating to the barony has been noticed – obviously Ambrians who share Mergai's spiritual beliefs. The situation is tense, to say the least, and in most of Yndaros' taverns the main question is debated daily: will the Queen allow the transgression to pass unpunished or will she accept the offer from commander Iakobo Vearra and let the Templars deal with the heretics?

Aside from the abovementioned examples, life in the smaller towns and villages is often more pleasant than life in the city. But there is a price to pay, in the form of constant threats from local bands of robbers. A handful of bandit chiefs are held up in the mountains, the most infamous ones being Baron Manvar Grendel's obstinate daughter, called the Ice Witch, and the ogre Mound and his gang of goblins and tamed rage trolls. The robbers attack villages, ambush travelers on the highroads and in mountain passes or strike at ships moving along the rivers. Fortunately, in most cases the bands are composed of five to ten desperate and not very organized ruffians without any other means to survive. But if you encounter one of the bigger bands you will need more than a handful of caravan guards to protect cargo and lives.

Besides the threats from robbers, life in Yndaros and its surroundings is relatively safe compared to other regions. Yes, refugees come carrying horrible diseases from the motherland, Davokar's predatory beasts and abominations reach the lowlands at times, and poverty and misery sometimes spark revolts in the area. But such challenges can almost always be dealt with before they turn disastrous. The Queen's capital contains both the strongest muscles and the sharpest brains, and when they team up there is no threat that is too great to handle, or rather, no such threat has so far been revealed.

Karvosti

I HAVE NEVER BEEN SO SCARED, *not before, nor ever since.*

Frozen to the bone, soaked by melting snow and by blood seeping from open wounds, I crawled towards the safety of the plateau. My head ached from memories of the night before – the roar of mighty wings, the fire in his eyes, Saran's cries in torment, the escape, the breathless escape.

As I reached the plateau I stumbled and fell. I rolled over on my back and pressed the one remaining artifact to my chest. People and torches wavered around me; humans in blood-red armor were soon joined by a towering wildling with serious eyes. And I was hoisted from the ground; I was carried trembling with fear, until I landed in the hot glow of a fire. There she waited for me. And for my treasure.

The Huldra was a voice, a bone-white mask and two embers that flared hotter than both the fire and the eyes of the Cryptwalker. "How dare you?" The question was an accusation, as if I was guilty of unspeakable crimes. "It is not a lone bear that sleeps, whose fur you unwittingly tug at; it is all bears and all other beings to add; a slumbering horde fed on anger and shame. And you come here carrying a crowing rooster and a decoy ..."

She pulled the figurine from my grip, eyed it at arm's length, before giving it to her serious friend, asking him to throw it into the deepest trench of Lake Volgoma. Then her gaze turned back at me:

"For a thousand years she has slept. Her nightmares have been violent but manageable. You are not to blame but you are guilty just the same, and blame aside, your suffering will neither be milder, nor greater than any others. When Davokar awakens."

Background

THE CLIFF OF KARVOSTI, the age-old meeting place and thingstead of the barbarian folks, rises like an island out of a sea of leaves about five days' ride northwest of Thistle Hold. Not much is known regarding its early days, but legends suggest that it first housed a number of temples and that it later became a refuge when the civilization of Symbaroum began to crumble. An indication to back that assumption is that the temple ruin rebuilt by the Sun Church is evidently older than the magnificent stronghold of the High Chieftain.

Whatever the truth may be, the barbarians have used the plateau for hundreds of years. Legends say it was the threatening hordes of the Spider King that five centuries ago caused the clans to appoint a common paramount leader and follow him into battle. The leader still exists but lost his authority as soon as the threat was taken care of. Like his predecessors the current High Chieftain, Tharaban, has no more power that what the clan leaders grant him, if and when they need him to mediate or adjudicate in particular disputes – sometimes in peaceful negotiations, sometimes acting as judge when blood feuds must be settled through brutal duels.

To aid him, Tharaban has Karvosti's witch node, spearheaded by the Huldra Yeleta. Formally the witches are advisors in all affairs dealt with on the cliff, providing guidance based on their profound understanding of the clans and the people. However, persistent gossip maintains that they are more than that; that it in fact is the Huldra who leads the barbarians with Tharaban as her mouthpiece – a notion which has become especially popular in Yndaros where skalds and minstrels fondly make use of Yeleta as the star of their more terrifying pieces.

Five years ago, the High Chieftain and the Huldra were faced with their greatest challenge in centuries. It was Ambrian explorers who first discovered the sun-like symbols on the plateau's ancient temple ruin. They were followed, first by missionaries, later by heavily armored Sun Knights intent on cleansing the cliff of savages. The Templars attacked but were after a bloody day of combat driven back by the High Chieftain's Wrathguards. Long and trying negotiations ensued, that finally ended in an agreement by which the Church of Prios was given the right to both remain on Karvosti and to restore the temple ruin. At about the same time, Queen Korinthia sent the eldest son of House Grendel to the cliff as her envoy.

The exact reasons behind the outcome of the negotiations remain unclear, but apparently Karvosti's symbolic importance is not great enough for the clans to rally in its defense. In addition, there are many who claim that the High Chieftain and the Huldra to some extent can appreciate having the Ambrians around, as allies in the fight against the Dark of Davokar.

In spite of the fact that Karvosti rests in the more open and brighter parts of the forest, it is not spared from encounters with corrupt monstrosities. Any barbarian can testify that the attacks from both beasts and abominations have grown more numerous over the past decade. Some whisper that the witches have foreseen such a development and that they are preparing for something called the Resurrection of Davokar. And even if the clanfolks tend to accuse the Ambrian people of having upset the woods, this may explain why the High Chieftain and the Huldra seeks peaceful agreements instead of war. If Davokar truly awakens it may prove to be a bad thing to have hostile Templars, Pansars and Ambrian mystics at your back.

The High Cheiftain's fortress as it appears under Tharaban's rule, mostly composed of structures that are a hundred years, two hundred years, if not three hundred years old. Yes, some are even older than that.

Overview

TODAY THE PLATEAU can be described as divided into three main areas – those of the barbarians, the Sun Church and Aloéna. The road to the top winds up along the eastern side of the cliff and ends at the combined meeting place and thingstead where visiting barbarians erect their tents and park their wagons – by the thousands during important gatherings, considerably fewer on average days.

If you walk south through the shrubbery covering the flat plateau you will soon pass the stronghold of the High Chieftain and eventually end up at a fault line – a rocky wall between thirty and fifty feet tall, spanning the surface from east to west. At its midpoint is the entrance to the cave-like dwelling of the witch node, and should you follow the wall westwards you would soon arrive at a camp inhabited by pilgrims and other visitors to the temple.

The quickest and easiest way to the upper level of the fault line runs through the witches' caves. But since they are reluctant to have their home used

as a transit route, a provisional bridge made out of two gigantic pine trunks has been established next to the camp site. The temple itself rests by the upper bridgehead, and further than that people seldom have the need or longing to walk, because in the towering grove found at the southern tip of the cliff lives Aloéna – a female being, ten feet tall and believed to be of elven offspring, who is said not to be very hospitable.

The atmosphere on Karvosti is characterized by a nervous calm that sometimes turns into tense watchfulness. The general feeling is that the threat from Davokar's beasts and beings continues to grow, and adding to that is the constant mistrust between barbarians and representatives of the Sun Church. At times the calm is shattered – a priest is attacked by harsh words or a thrown pebble on his way across the plateau; a lone Wrathguard encounters a similar situation while patrolling the camp site – instances which make both groups fear the start of a revenge spiral. But as soon as Elven arrows start raining from the sky or the bronze bell of the stronghold warns about inbound beasts all past transgressions are forgotten and blood-red Wrathguards are seen fighting side-by-side with Templars in shining armor.

Hopefully that order of things will prevail in the years to come.

THE THINGSTEAD

Two times a year, at the equinoxes of spring and autumn, High Chieftain Tharaban holds market days on Karvosti. During such events the northern part of the plateau is full of tents and wagons, inhabited by thousands of barbarians. By day you can hear children frolic and shout, women exchange news and men negotiate trade treaties or debate the right to newly found resources in the border regions. At night the festivities take over. The intoxicants flow, family-ties are knitted, and age-old conflicts resurface to spark more or less violent disputes.

Perhas most disconcerting for a visitor to witness is the settling of serious conflicts which have not found a solution through mediation attempts by the High Chieftain. Such disputes are resolved at dawn when the champions of the brawling parties meet on the Pole – the one who manages to strike his or her opponent down from a log that has been hoisted ten feet up in the air is deemed to be righteous.

Usually, however, it is much more peaceful at the Thingstead. On an average day there are about ten to twenty tents or wagons stationed on the dusty field, whose owners have come to seek the counsel of the Huldra or to trade with Ambrian merchants. Adding to that are groups of travelers visiting to get a few days' rest and to replenish their supplies.

The Guard of the Slumbering Wrath

The stronghold of the High Chieftain has for centuries been protected by the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath, composed of the barbarians' best warriors. The clans take great pride in their Wrathguards and the chieftain whose warriors are biggest, strongest, quickest or most skilled is always treated with great respect during gatherings at the Thingstead.

Normally the period of service is ten years, after which the guard returns to his or her clan. He does so without his blood and rust colored wrath armor and without much of the vigor he once brought along to Karvosti. Former Wrathguards never talk about their time of service, and most do not survive long after returning home – a reality that no barbarian wants to discuss, but about which Ambrians enjoy speculating. Maybe there is some truth to what is said, that the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath is fed a special elixir that makes them extra powerful but which they have a hard time doing without once the duty is done.

THE STRONGHOLD

The first version of the High Chieftain's residence was built about four to five hundred years ago and was not much more than a simple tower of wood and stone. That tower still stands, but has with time become incorporated in the continuously expanding stone stronghold that balances on the eastern rim of the plateau. Today the old three-story tower can be found right behind the throne in the enormous audience hall of the fortress, a hall that once was the outer walls of the castle constructed for Karvosti's fifth High Chieftain – the legendary Maiesticar, slayer of the Spider King.

Aside from the High Chieftain with family and servants, the stronghold houses the ninety-nine clan warriors of the honorary guard. The members of the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath – selected to represent the most disciplined and skilled fighters of the eleven clans – live in the west wing of the fortress, and they stand under Tharaban's direct control. The Wrathguard is divided into nine troops, composed of one warrior from each clan, that take turns guarding the stronghold, manning the station where the road comes up and patrolling along the rim of the plateau.

Finally, Lothar Grendel and his staff of three must be mentioned. Lothar's father, Baron Manvar, was the Chieftain in Kadizar when the Ambrians arrived and he was later made a noble as a reward for his swift and complete surrender. Baron Manvar's son is now tasked with being Queen Korinthia's legate on Karvosti – a task he is rumored to loath but manages flawlessly thanks to his barbarian heritage.

THE WITCHES

Mystics among the barbarians are usually called witches. They exist in all clans and are also loosely organized in a Circle. Four times a year each clan sends one of their witches to Karvosti, for a meeting where they account for the situation in their respective flocks – conflicts, clan members eligible for marriage, sicknesses and so on – and the state of the clan territory. Whispers on Karvosti imply that these congregations lately have become more and more burdened by talk of ominous omens and a growing threat from Davokar.

The Huldra Yeleta and the other two members of the Karvosti node, Gadramon and Eferneya, live in the ancient caves carved out of the fault line's wall. Anyone can enter the Antechamber, the great hall directly beyond the cave opening, hoping for an audience with the Arch Witch. But what lies beyond the five, draped openings to the inner caves is unknown to most. One can of course assume that the witches have their lodgings there and everybody knows that there are pathways going both to the upper level of the fault and down into the cliff, but the rest are rumors – rumors about ritual chambers full of bloody remains; about winding tunnels to Davokar's dark groundwater springs; about subterranean plantations of toxic as well as healing mushrooms; about caverns occupied by imprisoned abominations.

THE PILGRIM CAMP

All non-barbarians who undertake the walk up to the plateau are greeted by a troop of eleven Wrathguards who politely but firmly direct them to follow the trail running south along the western rim of the cliff. The obedient ones will soon come to see the temple up on the south side of the fault line and the small tent camp by the foot of the steep wall. When arriving at the camp they will most likely be warmly welcomed by a group of weary but happy pilgrims who direct them to an empty spot where they can set up their tents.

Soon they will come to see that the pilgrims are in company with other types of travelers – merchants there to trade with the barbarians and explorers studying barbarian culture or the ruin that has been renovated by the Sun Church. In addition, there are most often one or more groups of fortune-hunters who have climbed Karvosti in search of recuperation and healing. The informal leader of the camp is the former treasure-hunter Edrafin, who came searching for shelter after having lost his entire expedition in a nearby ruin complex. The terrible occurrence took place four years ago and Edrafin still does not dare to venture

1. The Thingstead
2. The Stronghold
3. The Pilgrim Camp
4. The Shrine of the Setting Sun
5. The grove of Aloéna

down into the woods – something he gladly admits but without ever touching upon exactly what he is afraid of and how he lost his friends. The curious one is left to speculate, based on the eye Edrafin has lost, the corrosive burns covering the left side of his body and the howls heard from his tent at night.

THE SHRINE OF THE SETTING SUN

It was Ambrian explorers who first detected the sun-like symbols on Karvosti's old temple ruin. The rumor traveled with them back to Yndaros and before long the Curia sent an expedition to the plateau, composed of theurgs and missionaries tasked to study the symbols more closely. After thorough examinations and numerous debates the verdict came: the ruin on Karvosti was indeed the oldest known temple erected in honor of Prios. It was decided that the heretical barbarians must be driven from the cliff, and a host of one hundred Templars embarked on a Sun March to accomplish the task.

It did not turn out as planned: the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath put up a good fight and Commander Iakobo Vearra found it best to seek a peaceful solution, with the aid of Queen Korinthia. It is whispered that the First Father and the other members of the Curia would have preferred to deal with the situation more forcefully, but whatever the truth may be the commander's initiative led to the Church being granted free passage to the holy ground surrounding the ruin.

Two years ago the relatively small but beautiful temple was finished, with the entrance pointing towards the setting sun in the west. A dozen friars and twice as many Templars live on site, and the shrine is visited by pilgrims and explorers on a daily basis. Aside from the head of the temple, Piromei, and his subordinate, the liturg Aranitra, the individuals come and go. The temple on Karvosti acts as a base for persons involved in the demanding and hazardous restoration of an even older ruin that has been discovered three days' march east of the plateau.

THE GROVE OF ALOÉNA

For as long as anybody knows a being called Aloéna has lived in a towering grove at the southern edge of the plateau. The ten-foot-tall, horned and humanoid female is assumed to be related to Davokar's elves. Among the barbarians it is said that she resides on Karvosti in order to protect something, and many were worried that she would be called into action when the Sun Church started to poke around in the ancient ruin. But that concern proved to be unfounded – her purpose for being on the cliff remains a mystery.

With only a few exceptions per year Aloéna never leaves her grove, and none but the witches dare to pay her a visit. No one, save the witches of Karvosti's witch node, can claim to have heard her speak; she appears to view humans with the same distance and indifference as a human would view a passing flock of birds. It is said that on rare occasions she has halted her slow walk over the plateau, made eye contact with a child or an elderly clan-member and given them a smile. Aside from that she seems to lack all interest in humans, who in their turn spend many and long discussions guessing who she really is, what she is waiting for and what would happen if someone happened to make her angry.

SURROUNDINGS

Karvosti lies deep within the woods and when standing on the plateau you see nothing but forest whichever way you turn. Looking east you can detect distinct patterns in the foliage, darker and denser the further your gaze wanders. In all other

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

" ... and tormented the Howler roars in agony; he who instead of an eternal life was awarded an eternally reoccurring death; he is Inja, the one whose pain echoes through Davokar each time the juices of life turn to vapors."

directions the panorama is characterized by leafy forests, sometimes intersected by rivers and lakes or darker patches of evergreens, but mainly of a nature which allows the rays of the sun to penetrate the tree tops.

According to legend the area surrounding Karvosti was densely populated in Symbarian times, and remnants of the old civilization can be found here and there. Much of it has already been mapped and explored for treasures, as for instance the mighty Pyramid of Serand and the deep-reaching Earth Towers by the Black Leech Rift. But the further you travel from the cliff, the more likely you are to find untouched ruins. The barbarians regard all remnants of Symbaroum as taboo and are not happy to welcome treasure-hunters to the plateau carrying their finds with them. But most obey Tharaban's dictate to let the Ambrians be, or rather to "suit themselves". A few can even take it a step further, and trade in information about virgin ruins, provided that the price is right.

There are not many settlements close to Karvosti. As previously stated, the Sun Church and a horde of goblins are about to explore and restore another temple ruin three days to the east. Aside from that, the Baiaga clan has one of its camp sites about one day's march to the north and the Odaiova clan's main settlement is about as far to the south. Rumors also speak about two groups of free settlers living in the area – one at the northern shores of Lake Volgoma, another by the forest edge west of Karvosti. But if that is true, their inhabitants are very elusive and never make an effort to visit the cliff of the barbarians.

HOEVER YOU ARE, wherever you're from, whatever you believe and think you are able to accomplish – none of it matters! I've seen fully armored, battle hardened knights weep from exhaustion; I've heard Masters of Ordo Magica try to yell with throats closed up with fear; I know of one or two master burglars who've been mutilated by its ancient traps.

No, tell you what, neither a strong arm nor a head full of smarts is enough to survive Davokar. The squire outlives the knight if he only has perseverance enough. The apprentices of the Master have a bigger chance to come back alive if they but face its horrors without fear. Yes, any child would fare better and live longer than the Thief King of Ambria, if only it traded arrogance for caution.

You may scoff and sigh and roll your sky-blues, but be warned! A well-developed aptitude, the right sort of schooling and pricy gear is not enough for the true adventurer. With that you can get started, but it's rarely enough to get you to your destination and never enough to get you back out, if not combined with patience, guts and a bewitchin' amount of forethought!"

Truth slurred forth by Erdaro One-Eye at the Rose Garden, Thistle Hold

BOOK 2:

PLAYER'S GUIDE

Introduction

AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, this part of the book is primarily meant for the players of Symbaroum. The Game Master will have to be familiar with the rules as well, but the content of this section mainly focuses on how to create a character and the rules that the players will use while playing the game.

THIS FIRST CHAPTER begins with a section describing what aspects of roleplaying are meant to be handled by the players, followed by an introduction to the process of creating a character. The eight chapters that come thereafter explain the different parts of character creation in depth – from Attributes and Abilities to what equipment a character has from the start.

The last chapter in the Player's Guide describes the players' ruleset. There you can learn how combat works, how to handle wounds and healing, as well as how to improve a character and develop its abilities using the *Experience* gained from completing adventures.

In this book you will hopefully find all of the tools needed in order to create colorful characters and to let them make a name for themselves among Ambrians and barbarians. If you, for any reason, would like to deviate from or add to the rules presented below – feel free to bring it up for discussion with your gaming group. Your character is your conduit and avatar in the setting of Symbaroum, so it is vitally important that you make it your own and create it just the way you want it.

The Role of the Player

THE PLAYERS AND the Game Master have an equal responsibility for the shared experience, even if their roles are a bit different when playing. Below you will find suggestions regarding what aspects of the game session the players should take the main responsibility for. It is entirely up to you and your group if you wish to deviate from what is said below, in which case the suggestions may serve as a guideline for your discussions and decisions.

CREATING CHARACTERS

The number of players in a gaming group preferably ranges between two and four, though it is fully possible to play with only one player and a Game Master. The number of players aside, each player is in control of one character through which he or she experiences and interacts with the game world.

Before you create your character it might be a good idea to ask the Game Master about the upcoming adventure or the campaign: what kind of character would be appropriate to play? You should also talk with the other players in the group. What are they playing and in what way can the characters complement each other?

THE CHARACTER'S GOAL

Establish at least one distinct goal for your character – something that he or she wants to achieve,

defend or avoid. The goal(s) will change over time as the character evolves but there should always be at least one clear goal that helps in propelling the game forward.

As a guideline, it can be said that some goals are inappropriate for characters and gaming groups. Goals that are an inevitable effect of playing and therefore lack dramatic potential fall into this category – for instance, "to get better equipment", "to get more money", "to gain more *Experience*" and "to have more and better abilities". You will find examples of more suitable goals in the box The Character's Goal.

THE GROUP'S GOAL

It is good for the group to share a common goal besides the characters' personal ones. Discuss with the other players what your group would like to accomplish, in the short or the long run. Grander goals will probably be more constant over time, while lesser ones may come to change and be replaced as the game moves forward.

BRING THE CHARACTER TO LIFE

Describe your character to the group so that everybody gets a sense of who he or she is. Play and act as if you were there, experiencing it all, and trying to achieve the character's goals. When things happen, react to them. Describe what your character wants to do and the Game Master will explain what is needed for that to succeed.

INITIATE SCENES

You should not be afraid to initiate things, to let your character respond to and interact with the game world. Describe your intentions and the Game Master will decide what you need to do in order to make it happen. Sometimes the Game Master will turn your initiative into a challenge, for you or for the entire group.

DEVELOP YOUR CHARACTER

Allow your character to change as an effect of what he or she experiences and what happens in the game world – just as Frodo and Bilbo are changed by their adventures. Depending on what he or she has to suffer, it is possible for a character to change anything from beliefs and goals to appearance and the focus of its abilities. Between game sessions you can use the *Experience* that your character has gained to increase abilities that correspond to what challenges he or she has faced, or acquire new abilities that mirror the character's hard-earned experiences.

DESCRIBE FUTURE PLANS

When a game session ends, describe what your character intends to do next, so the Game Master can prepare for it. Should the session instead mark the end of an entire adventure, describe what your player character will do until the start of the next adventure.

The Character's Goal

- Restore your family's honor
- Become the leader of a guild, chapter or an organization
- Become the acknowledged master of a particular area of expertise
- Take revenge on a person or a creature
- Save a person from captivity
- Find a missing person
- Lift a curse that has fallen on the character or someone else
- Retrieve a lost heirloom or weapon

How to Create a Character

RULESWISE, YOUR CHARACTER is defined by some numbers and notes on a character sheet. The numbers indicate what your character is good at, what abilities and powers it has and how much damage its weapons can inflict on an enemy. The notes can describe what kind of equipment the character carries, what its goals are and what kind of personality it has.

Where you get your inspiration from when creating a character may vary, but it often comes from movies, TV-shows and books. Some may only need the texts and pictures within this book, or they may use their ordinary selves as a starting point for building their character. In the end the source of inspiration is irrelevant, but your character has to feel alive, has to have goals and a personality that belongs in the setting of Symbaroum. If you manage to create that, then acting as the character should be both fun and easy.

The easiest way to create a character is to pick an archetype (Warrior, Mystic or Rogue), one of its associated occupations (Berserker, Witch or Treasure Hunter, for example) and follow the recommendations regarding Attributes, Race, Abilities and so on. That way you will be ready to play in no time.

The Group's Goal

- Lead a large group of people to safety
- Establish an organization together
- Establish a base for the group
- Obtain more land, ships or wagons
- Gain control of a specific location
- Overthrow a leader
- Become a force to be reckoned with in a specific location or in a particular area of expertise
- Remove a serious and known threat towards the group
- Lift a curse
- Form an alliance with another faction in the area
- Mediate peace between two fighting parties
- Fulfill a prophecy
- Find a legendary artifact or site

However, there is nothing that stops you from creating a character entirely from scratch, without regard to archetypes and occupations, just the way you want it in terms of Attributes and powers. The archetypes and their respective occupations are only meant to inspire and to offer a quick and easy way into the game and the setting.

ARCHETYPES (PAGE 82)

The three archetypal backgrounds presented – Warrior, Mystic, Rogue – cover the most common roles for combat and problem-solving found in a group of adventurers. A balanced group contains representatives from all three of these archetypes, which means that the group can handle different types of challenges. This kind of composition also gives each character a greater chance of being in the spotlight at some point during each game session.

Warriors are typically heavily armored and armed fighters who excel in melee combat. Many Warriors are natural leaders that can command and assist their fellow adventurers on the battlefield. Mystics are a diverse lot and can act as a scorcher of enemies or as a healer of allies in battle. The Mystics are often skilled problem-solvers as well, many times thanks to their access to mystical rituals. The Rogue is an agile and cunning combatant, whether fighting from a distance or in close quarters. Rogues are also skillful problem-solvers, especially when it comes to practical or socially oriented challenges.

Each archetype is further exemplified by a number of occupations – a Rogue may for example be a Treasure-Hunter, a Ranger or a Charlatan. In other words, the occupations are suggestions of different kinds of vocations which bring life and variation to the characters.

Example: *Let us follow the player Mira as she creates a character. Mira decides to play a mystic of some kind, but doesn't want to start as any of the occupations described as part of the archetype. She therefore writes Mystic under "Archetype" on her character sheet and continues her character's creation with an open mind.*

ATTRIBUTES (PAGE 100)

Numerically a character is defined by his or her Attributes, eight values that every creature has, but at varying levels: *Accurate*, *Cunning*, *Discreet*, *Persuasive*, *Quick*, *Resolute*, *Strong* and *Vigilant*.

These Attributes can be interpreted as talents, skills and interests that the character has acquired so far during his or her lifetime, and correspond to all challenges the character may face in the game. When a character attempts to achieve something of importance within the game world, the player rolls a 20-sided die, called a D20, and compares the result with the value of one of the Attributes. The test is successful if the outcome of the dice roll is equal to or lower than the Attribute value. In other words: the higher the number a character has in an Attribute, the better.

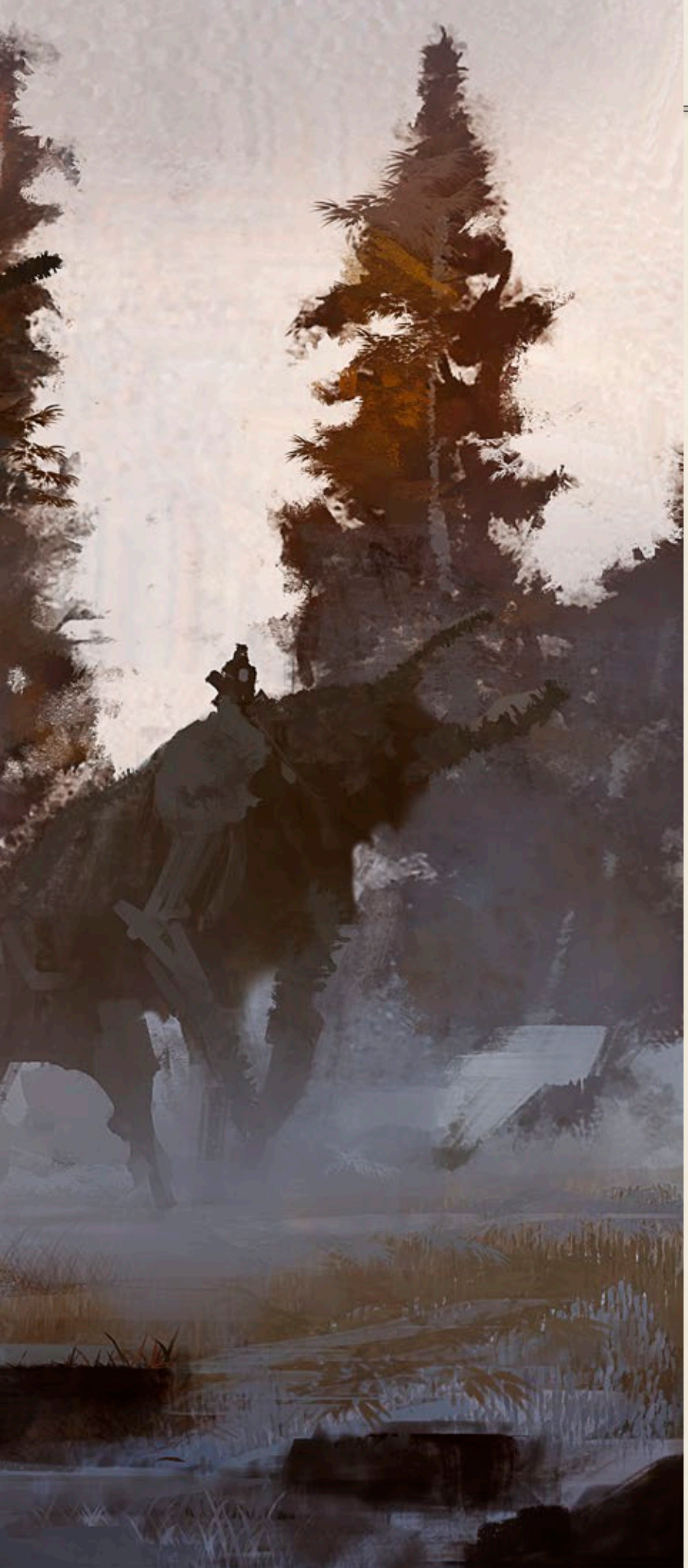
A central part of character creation is to decide which of the Attributes are important and which are less so. Choosing Abilities will help you in that decision, since abilities are often based on certain Attributes, and therefore indicate what Attributes the player should put most emphasis on.

There are two ways to determine a character's Attributes:

- **Typical distribution:** Distribute the values 5, 7, 9, 10, 10, 11, 13, 15 among the character's Attributes. If the player wishes, he or she may then transfer points between the Attributes. Only one attribute value may be as high as 15 and none can be higher than 15 or lower than 5.
- **Point Buy:** Distribute 80 points among the eight Attributes. Only one attribute value may be as high as 15 and none can be higher than 15 or lower than 5.

Example: *Mira places 15 in Resolute, since it's an important Attribute for Mystics. She then places the rest of the values like so: Accurate 10, Cunning 13, Discreet 5, Persuasive 7, Quick 11, Strong 10 and Vigilant 9. These values can be changed and moved later on as the character starts to take shape.*

According to Master Malliano these signs, carved in the tower ruin in Old Kadizar, seem to name the settlement that lay there at the height of Symbaroum's power. He has proposed Agrathor or Ergatharor as possible pronunciations.



RACE (PAGE 102)

There are many and varied creatures in Ambria and Davokar, but the races available to players when they create their characters are changeling, human, ogre and goblin. Humans are further divided into two subgroups: Ambrians and barbarians.

Example: *Mira likes ogres; those hulking loners of unknown origin. On the surface they may seem more suited to be Warriors than Mystics, but Mira is not bothered by that. She writes ogre under Race on her character sheet. She also makes some changes in her Attributes. She imagines her character to be tall and wiry, if not massive as a troll, so she changes Strong to 11 and Quick to 10.*

ABILITIES (PAGE 112)

Abilities cover the talents and special skills which give the character more alternatives in combat or when solving a problem. The Abilities are divided into three levels of expertise, from Novice through Adept to Master. A new character most often starts with two abilities or powers at novice level and one at adept level, but you may instead choose to start with five abilities at novice level and none at adept level. Gaming groups that would rather have more experienced characters right from the start can of course decide on another starting level.

Example: *Since Mira's character is an ogre she first decides to take the Robust trait at novice level. She does not have to select that trait, but it somehow feels right. To make her character less one-dimensional Mira decides to take five abilities at novice level, rather than two at novice level and one at adept level. After picking Robust Mira has four more to choose. When she is done browsing the abilities Mira picks Mystical Power (Confusion), Ritualist (*the *Telepathic Interrogation* ritual*), Natural Warrior and Recovery.*

MYSTICAL TRADITIONS (PAGE 126)

Any character can learn to use mystical powers and rituals, but for those who intend to use them frequently it is wise to learn the theory and practice of some mystical tradition. The reason for this is Corruption. When Mystics make use of their powers and rituals, their bodies and Shadows (see below) are tainted by corruption, which one day may lead to ruin.

The Mystics of the Queen's folk are the cunning wizards of Ordo Magica (the *Wizardry* ability) and the theurgs predominantly found within the Church of Prios (the *Theurgy* ability). The barbarian witches wield a much older, more natural, magic,

shunned by the southerners but highly regarded by the barbarians and their chieftains (the *Witchcraft* ability). Sorcerers (the *Sorcery* ability) are desperate and power-hungry mystics that instead of trying to avoid corruption, embrace it and use its tainting powers for their own nefarious purposes.

Again, a character does not have to belong to any of these traditions to learn individual mystical powers. However, the mystic who decides to go that way should take heed, and must be prepared to face the inevitable corruption alone.

Example: *Mira has decided that her player character should only partially rely on her mystical powers and does not want the ogre to belong to any tradition. She therefore disregards the traditions and keeps the creation points that she already has placed in Natural Warrior. That way her ogre becomes more diverse rather than a purebred mystic.*

SHADOW

Every creature and object in the game world has a Shadow, an expression of its spiritual alliances or its innermost essence. The Shadow indicates to which of the three primal principles a character has the strongest bond (to the discipline of civilization, the wildness of nature or the corruption of darkness), whether the character knows about this bond or not.

Characters can learn to see the Shadow of other creatures by using abilities like *Witchsight* or rituals like *Holy Smoke*. Creatures that are close to nature have shadows that range in the colors of green, red or white, while the shadows of civilized people tend to appear in gold, silver or copper. Many who dwell in the southern parts of Davokar or in northern Ambria are of a mixed nature and their shadows can therefore consist of a combination of colors. The shadows of true blight beasts are abysmally black, while a corrupted creature of nature is revealed by sickly spots on green, red with streaks of rust or with ashen grey among the white. In the case of corrupted creatures of civilization the shadows tend to be chipped gold, blackened silver or corroded copper. A character's Shadow is closely connected with the character's level of Corruption, a circumstance that Mystics should be extra aware of.

Example: *Mira provides her ogre with a white shadow, as she feels it fits the idea of a spiritual side to the solitary giant. She describes the Shadow as "white as morning mists over the meres of Davokar". Trailing flakes of ash can occasionally be seen within the mist, as a sign of the ogre's dawning corruption. The ogre gets one (1) permanent Corruption for its ritual and another one (1) for its Confusion power. Mira writes down 2 points of permanent Corruption on her character sheet.*

EQUIPMENT (PAGE 148)

A character's starting equipment, weapons and money are decided by its archetype or by abilities and powers picked by the player.

All characters start with camping gear consisting of a sleeping roll, cooking equipment and firewood. Trinkets suited to the character's backstory may be added at no cost: a deck of cards, pipe and tobacco, fishing rod and a case of bait, a signal horn or the like are welcomed since they make the character come alive. Memorabilia like a lock of hair from a lover, a wooden figurine from a deceased relative or an embroidered handkerchief as the only clue to the murderer of the character's father really do enrich the history of a character. Abilities that are based on *Cunning* (like *Alchemy, Beast Lore, Loremaster, Poisoner* and *Tactician*) are likely accompanied by impressive tomes and well-thumbed scrolls regarding the topic in question.

When it comes to starting weapons, a character receives the weapon or weapons associated with a

Table 4: Starting Equipment

ABILITY OR POWER	STARTING EQUIPMENT
Man-at-arms	Medium armor
Marksman	Crossbow or bow
Polearm Mastery	Spear
Shield Fighter	Shield
Steel Throw	One throwing weapon
Twin Attack	One single-handed weapon (novice), two single-handed weapons (adept)
Two-handed Force	One heavy weapon
Witchhammer	One single-handed weapon

specific ability for free, as well as a dagger. Should a character lack abilities or powers that are based on weaponry, then he or she may instead start with any of the following combinations:

- a sturdy staff and a dagger
- a single-handed weapon and a dagger
- a ranged weapon and a dagger

Other than weapons, a character starts with an ordinary light armor. If a player should want heavier armor, then he or she has to purchase it with the character's starting funds. It may be wise to purchase armor with the Flexible quality, should you be able to afford it: Mystics can buy a witch gown, a wizard's cloak or a priest robe.

MONEY

The character starts with 5 thaler in its purse, unless any of its traits say differently. The player can use these thaler to purchase additional weapons, armor and equipment.

The primary currency used in Ambria consists of shillings and ortegs, besides the thaler. Ten ortegs makes one shilling and ten shillings makes one thaler. For an orteg, you can afford common quality living for a day in the countryside, while an equal standard in a city or a town costs a shilling. Tools, weapons and armor usually cost one thaler or more.

Example: *Since Mira's ogre has the Pariah trait, she doesn't start with much more than the basic equipment. The ogre gets a club as a weapon, as well as a dagger for eating and a leather apron for light armor. Mira writes down 5 shillings in the ogre's purse, but adds a flute to the equipment list, which she thinks that the ogre should have. On the flute the ogre is going to play sad tunes, their origin unknown even to the ogre herself.*

PERSONALITY

Fill your character with details that will help to breathe life into the numbers. The character will of course need a name and a detailed background, maybe even a quote that captures its way of speaking and expressing itself. Decide on at least one personal goal for the character, as well as a goal for the whole group, so that the characters have something in common to fight for when the game starts.

Example: *An ogre should have a rough name, given to her by the people she has spent time with. After some consideration Mira decides to name her character Grumpa, based on the fact that ogres can sometimes be cranky and, well, a bit grumpy.*

On the character sheet there is space for a fitting quote, something the player thinks captures the essence of the character or its views on life. Mira writes "You helped me, I'll help you" as Grumpa's quote, as it coincides with the ogre's goal (see below).

Regarding her background, Mira imagines that Grumpa was found wandering aimlessly along one of the many roads connecting keeps and villages on the southern border of Davokar. Grumpa was adopted by a traveling theater company, which had her do the heavy work like raising tents and digging latrines. Soon the leader of the company discovered that the ogre knew how to read people's minds. After that, the theater company added the act "Xavagunda – the Horrendous Witch" to their repertoire.

GOALS

It is hard to say something generic as to which goals a character or a group should choose. However, what is important is that the goals should make for exciting and interesting stories; the Game Master should be able to use the goals as a starting point for designing individual encounters or entire adventures.

It is also nice if the goals are tied to the game world of Symbaroum. The Campaign Book provides a wide collection of locations, persons and events that the players can use for inspiration – for instance, names of noble families for a character to have a feud with.

Example: *After some thought Mira decides on a primary goal for her character: someone in Davokar taught her to use magic and play sad songs on the flute. Grumpa doesn't remember who this person was. Her goal is to find this person and repay her debt of gratitude. Mira lets the GM decide how and when this will come into play. She then decides on some goals together with the rest of the players in the group. The others like the idea of a theater company and they decide that all their characters should be tied to the company. They name it The White Dove's Theater Company. Collectively they make an addition to the backstory: the group is really a gang of thieves that's fronting as a theater company to be able to travel freely and to find suitable victims. Grumpa's mindreading ritual is very useful when it comes to the latter. Together with the Game Master the group decides that The White Dove's Theater Company is headed for the plateau of Karvosti after a series of successful break-ins (the group adds "Escape the fury of Baron Flagros" as one of their common goals). The barbarians are said to be gathering at the Thingstead, and many are drawn to Karvosti – an excellent opportunity for an exotic theater company with very nimble fingers!*

Creating a Character

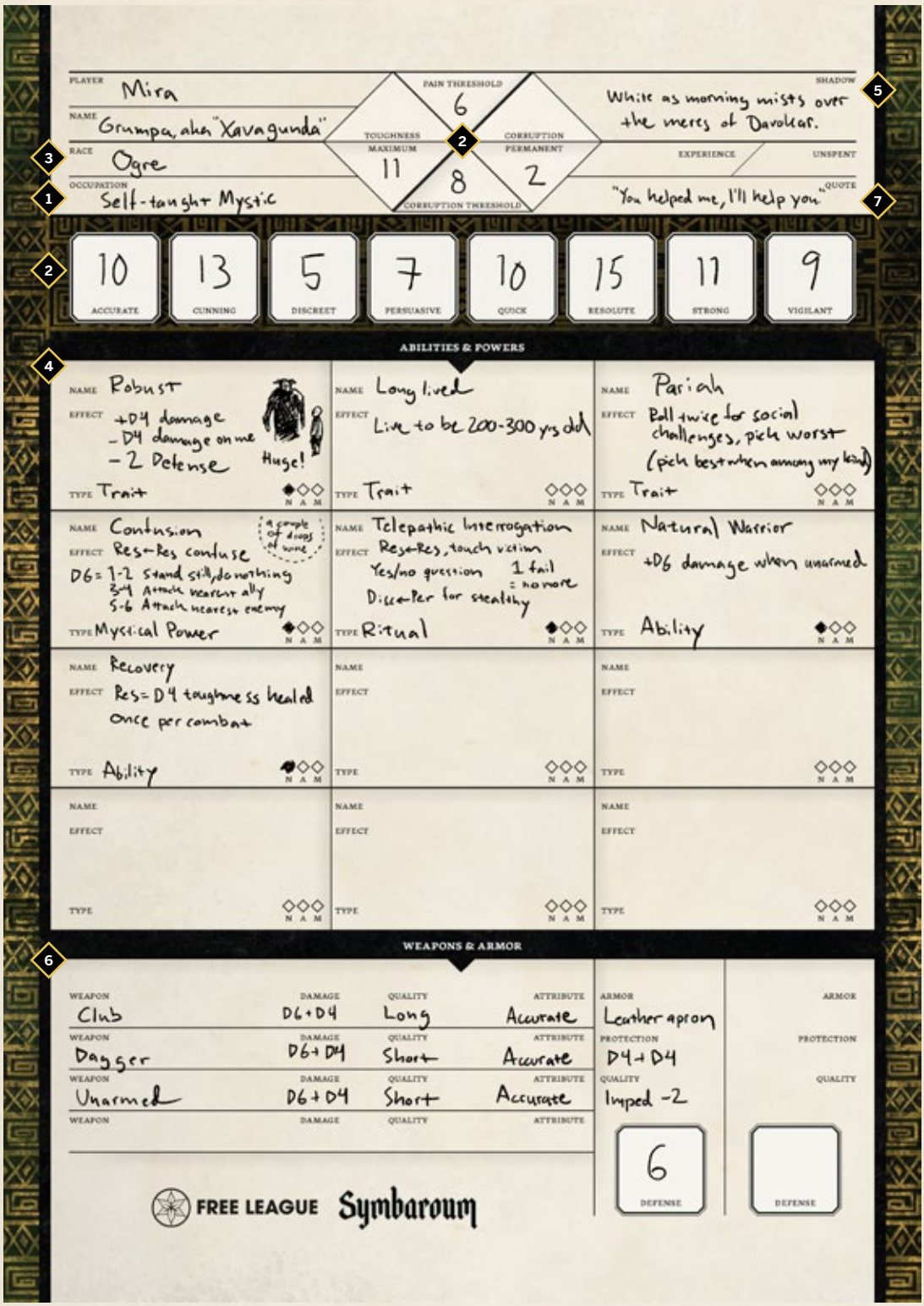
1
Pick Occupation
Page 82
You can either pick one of the occupations suggested among the Archetypes, or make something up.

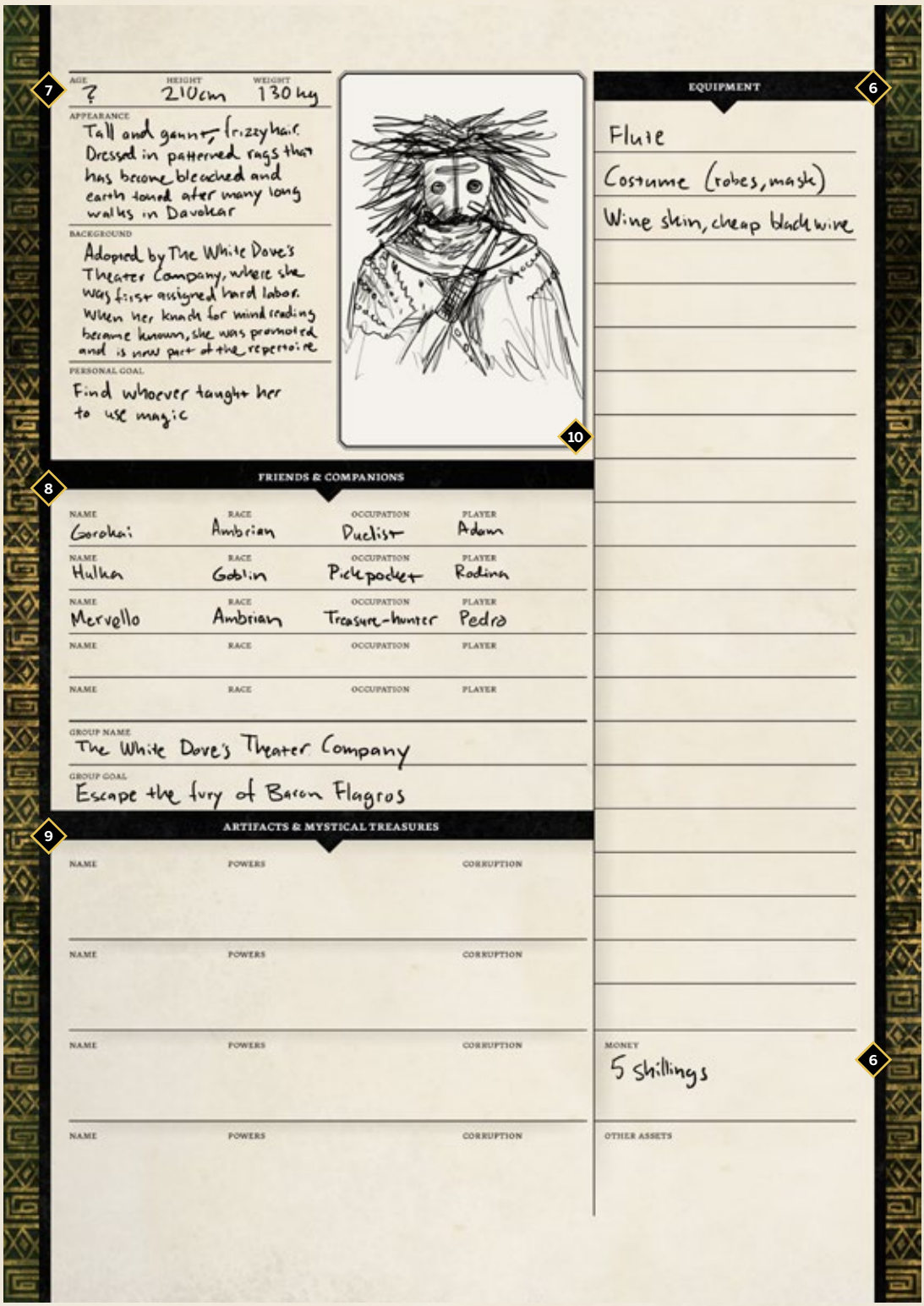
2
Attributes
Page 100
Assign a value to each of the eight Attributes and calculate the values of the Secondary Attributes based on the primary ones.

3
Pick Race
Page 102
Pick a race for your character.

4
Abilities & Powers
Page 112
Write the name of each selected power in a box, followed by its effect and what type of power it is (Ability, Trait, Mystic Power or Ritual). If relevant, also check one of the boxes to indicate the power's level. (Novice, Adept, Master).

5
Describe your Shadow
Describe how your character's Shadow appears to those who can see it.





AGE ? HEIGHT 210cm WEIGHT 130 kg

APPEARANCE
Tall and gaunt, frizzy hair. Dressed in patterned rags that has become bleached and earth toned after many long walks in Davokar

BACKGROUND
Adopted by The White Dove's Theater Company, where she was first assigned hard labor. When her knack for mind reading became known, she was promoted and is now part of the repertoire

PERSONAL GOAL
Find whoever taught her to use magic

EQUIPMENT
Flute
Costume (robes, mask)
Wine skin, cheap blackwine

FRIENDS & COMPANIONS

NAME	RACE	OCCUPATION	PLAYER
Gorokai	Ambrian	Duelist	Adam
Hulka	Goblin	Pickpocket	Rodina
Mervello	Ambrian	Treasure-hunter	Pedra

GROUP NAME
The White Dove's Theater Company

GROUP GOAL
Escape the fury of Baron Flagros

ARTIFACTS & MYSTICAL TREASURES

NAME	POWERS	CORRUPTION

MONEY
5 shillings

OTHER ASSETS

6

Money & Equipment
Page 148
A character usually starts with 5 thaler in his or her purse, as well as some basic equipment, and also weapons and armor associated with specific Abilities.

7

Personality & Background
Does your character have any family, friends, enemies and contacts? Write a quote that captures your character's way of expressing him- or herself.

8

Friends & Companions
Here you can keep track of the rest of the party's players and their characters. If the group has a name, write it here. In the example shown, the player Rodina has chosen to make up an occupation – Pickpocket – for her character.

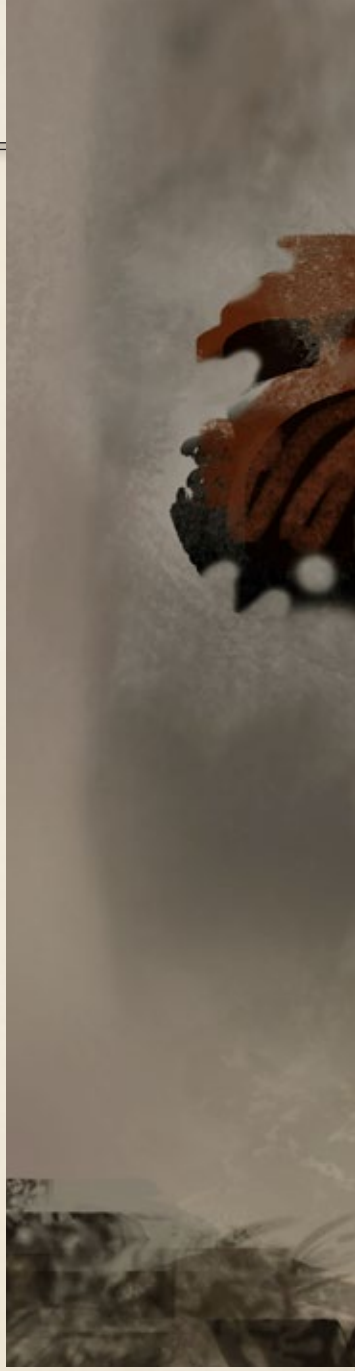
9

Artifacts
If you find Artifacts and mystical treasures, describe them here.

10

Draw a Portrait
Here you can depict your character, should you have an artistic inclination.

Archetypes



THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES the archetypes that the player may use as a starting point when creating a character. Together the Warrior, Mystic and Rogue archetypes cover the most common functions needed for combat and problem-solving in a group of adventurers. Each archetype is exemplified by five occupations and each occupation comes with suggestions on suitable Attributes and Abilities.

Warrior

"Here you got twin blade-wielding goblins, barbarian axe dancers, ogre pit fighters and fully armored knights of the finest stock – pick one of them to give you your first painful lesson!"

Agna Trollslayer, Sword Master in Thistle Hold.

THE BARBARIAN CLANS of Davokar and the kingdom of Ambria house many traditions of war and combat. Some Warriors are professionals – soldiers with a pragmatic point of view, regarding warfare as a vocation. Others stem from noble families and bloodlines, and consider the glory of battle to be a part of their heritage. To some the art of war is nothing more than a method needed to survive, while others use their prowess in battle for a higher purpose, such as serving Prios the Sun God or restoring family honor lost during The Great War.

Regardless of culture and origins, the Warrior's main arena is the battlefield, where he or she often assumes the role of a heavily armed shock trooper. The Warrior can also contribute to effective problem-solving, mainly through their capacity to lead.

WARRIORS AND THE RACES

Ogres are commonly considered to be the exemplary Warrior, closely followed by humans. Changelings are seldom regarded as classical Warrior material, and the same goes for goblins. You can definitely find Warriors among changelings and goblins, but these tend to rely on agility and finesse rather than on raw physical strength.

WARRIOR ATTRIBUTES

A Warrior's primary Attribute is *Strong*, followed by *Accurate* and *Quick* – it is of course necessary for a Warrior to endure pain and damage, to have true aim and to swiftly seize the initiative. Beyond that, it is a question of whether the Warrior is a leader (*Persuasive*), resilient against mystical powers (*Resolute*) or especially aware of his or her surroundings (*Vigilant*).

WARRIOR ABILITIES

Warriors are usually a rough and hardy lot, yet some have more of a tactical mind and many are strong leaders. Finesse is rarely the trademark of a Warrior but there are definitely those among them who take pride not just in winning, but also in how they win.

The following abilities are often found in a Warrior's arsenal, sorted according to Attributes.

- **Accurate:** *Polearm Mastery, Shield Fighter, Twin Attack, Two-handed Force*
- **Persuasive:** *Dominate, Leader*
- **Quick:** *Acrobatics*, Quickdraw
- **Resolute:** *Bodyguard, Steadfast*
- **Strong:** *Iron Fist, Steadfast*
- **General:** *Berserker, Equestrian, Exceptional Attribute, Man-at-arms, Recovery*

BERSERKER

"Keep your distance! I wouldn't want to hurt you."

Spirits of rage follow you and fill you with uncontrolled ferocity in battle. When you are not in combat you are of a thoughtful and patient disposition, a contrast that makes you both appreciated and feared. The barbarians speak of the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath, a handpicked group of berserkers serving as the High Chieftain's bodyguard – do you dream of joining their ranks, or do you seek to defeat one of them as revenge for taking your place among them?

- **Important Attributes:** *Strong* 13+, *Quick* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Barbarian or ogre
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Berserker, Iron Fist, Recovery, Two-handed Force*

DUELIST

"Please, refrain from bleeding on me when I run you through."

Honor and glory is everything for a Warrior, and even better if one can defend their name with some flair. You have been living your life guided by that code and the fact that you are still alive undoubtedly speaks well of your talent.

- **Important Attributes:** *Accurate* 13+, *Quick* or *Discreet* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Ambrian or changeling
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Acrobatics*, *Feint*, *Man-at-arms*, *Twin Attack*

CAPTAIN

"Everything will work out fine – just follow my lead!"

You are a natural born leader and have built your military career on that. Swordplay is only a way to keep yourself alive and maybe gain the respect of your subordinates at the same time. You bring out the best in your allies, guiding and protecting them so you can achieve your military goals. That is how you gain their trust.

- **Important Attributes:** *Persuasive* 13+
- **Suggested race:** Human (usually Ambrian)
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Dominate, Leader, Man-at-arms, Shield Fighter*

SELLSWORD

"My sword and my life, in exchange for you gold."

Fighting has been a way of life for you – for payment. The lords of Ambria often employ hired swords in their campaigns against the barbarians of Davokar, while the clan leaders of Davokar do the same in return. Merchants need guards, as do pilgrims. You may have fought for different masters over the years, but the key to your survival has always been your skill and an instinct for judging what battles can or cannot be won.

- **Important Attributes:** *Strong* 13+
- **Suggested race:** Human
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Iron Fist*, *Man-at-arms*, *Polearm Mastery*, *Shield Fighter*

KNIGHT

"You may take my life, but not my honor."

You are a knight who fights to break the enemy's lines or to hold your own. Heavily armored on the outside and with a deep sense of duty on the inside, you fight for the favor of your lord, the lives of your allies or your own glory. Maybe you dream of one day becoming a member of the Queen's royal guard or a Templar fighting in the name of Prios.

- **Important Attributes:** *Strong* 13+, *Quick* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Ambrian
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Bodyguard, Iron Fist, Man-at-arms, Two-handed Force*

Mystic

"Each time you light a candle you also create a shadow."

Seldonio, Grand Master of Ordo Magica

THERE ARE MANY SOURCES of mystical power in the world. These can be tapped by one who understands the underlying laws of nature or through alliances with either the light of the heavens, the spirits of the forest or the darkness of corruption. Some Mystics consider themselves to be scholars of reality and existence; others would claim they are part of a pact that offers them an intimate relationship with the source of their power.

MYSTICS AND THE RACES

Changelings and humans dominate the domain of the mystical, at least according to public opinion. The stories of the witches of the barbarian clans are spread far and wide and it is near impossible not to notice the Ordo Magica of Ambria. The theurgs of the Light are a less obvious group since they tend to keep to the temples or move among the faithful, but the Lawgiver is known to bless some of his champions with extraordinary powers.

Mystics among the goblins are shamans, bound to no mystic tradition but earning high status among their own kind with their home-brewed theories regarding the world and its spirits. Changelings often have the mystical gift – those who grow up among the barbarians are sent away to train with the witches, while changelings in the slums of Ambria become self-taught mystics without any specific tradition. Ogres with the mystical gift may seem like a rarity, but Ordo Magica has documented at least a few cases since the Ambrians arrived in the region.

MYSTIC ATTRIBUTES

Mystics hold a strong mind in high regard (*Resolute*), and among witches it is the will of the individual that decides if they are to be accepted as apprentices or not. To the mages of Ordo Magica classical education (*Cunning*) is just as important and the theurges of Prios are often considered as having a strong personality (*Persuasive*). Mystics trained outside these traditions are often armed with a tremendous willpower, just like sorcerers, who also have extensive experience in how to not attract any unwanted attention (*Discreet*).

MYSTIC ABILITIES

Many Mystics, though not all of them, possess abilities tied to the traditions of *Wizardry*, *Sorcery*, *Theurgy* or *Witchcraft*. Furthermore, even if most Mystics are associated with wisdom and learning, there are those who are drawn to the art of war and who have developed abilities for using mystical powers in battle.

The following abilities are common among Mystics, sorted according to Attributes.

- **Accurate:** *Natural Warrior*, *Polearm Mastery*
- **Cunning:** *Alchemy*, *Beast Lore*, *Loremaster*, *Medicus*
- **Persuasive:** *Dominate*, *Leader*
- **Quick:** *Acrobatics*
- **Resolute:** *Mystical Power*, *Steadfast*
- **Strong:** *Steadfast*
- **Vigilant:** *Sixth Sense*, *Witchsight*
- **General:** *Berserker*, *Exceptional Attribute*, *Wizardry*, *Recovery*, *Ritualist*, Sorcery, *Theurgy*, *Witchcraft*

WITCH

"Your will is inferior to the will of Nature. Accept it! Or die."

Your home is the wilds; to balance your own needs with the ones of nature is your calling. As a witch you have a strong connection to the land itself and can add its primal powers to your inner strength. You negotiate with the spirits of nature, understand the flow and needs of the land, and your powers are derived from the circle of life and death.

- **Important Attributes:** *Resolute* 13+, *Accurate* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Barbarian or changeling
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Mystical Power*, *Natural Warrior*, *Ritualist*, *Witchcraft*

SORCERER

"There is another way, an easier way..."

Driven by desperation or a lust for power, you walk the path of sorcery and will soon find yourself both touched by Corruption and hunted by fanatical witchhunters. Maybe you perceive your vulnerability as a proof of your need to grow even more powerful? Or are you truly remorseful and seeks a way back to forgiveness and salvation?

- **Important Attributes:** *Resolute* 13+, *Discreet* or *Cunning* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Human
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Alchemy*, *Mystical Power*, *Ritualist*, *Sorcery*

THEURG

"Prios sees thee, heretic!"

You are a theurg, a priest with mystical powers. Your faith in the Lawgiver is unwavering: Prios is the sun and the light of the soul, the One who saved mankind from the bondage of the Old Gods, the creator of the world and protector of all life. From this pure spring flows extraordinary power. Your mystical knowledge would have been aimless and dangerous without your faith as a compass and foundation, as is often shown when godless Mystics wield their powers.

- **Important Attributes:** *Resolute* 13+, *Cunning* or *Vigilant* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Ambrian
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Medicus*, *Mystical Power*, *Ritualist*, *Theurgy*

WIZARD

"Remarkable, this must be brought back for further research!"

You are schooled in the secrets of the old magic of the Order, wisdoms born in the southern kingdom and refined by a millennium of research and education. To you, mystical powers are an extension of the fundamental laws of the world, laws that you have studied carefully and know how to use for effects both grand and impressive.

- **Important Attributes:** *Resolute* 13+, *Cunning* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Ambrian
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Loremaster, Mystical Power, Ritualist, Wizardry*

SELF-TAUGHT MYSTIC

"They said that I didn't take my powers seriously; I'll show them how wrong they were."

You are a self-taught mystic, excluded from the traditions, never accepted by your peers or completely uninterested in the narrow worldviews they offer. However, your freedom comes at a price: corruption is lurking around each corner and you are fair game to witch-hunters and Black Cloaks. Whether you wander from village to village or hide in a bustling city, you probably earn your living by offering your services as an occult consultant or a finder of misplaced objects.

- **Important Attributes:** *Resolute* 13+, *Vigilant* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Ambrian or changeling
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Mystical Power* (any two), *Ritualist*, *Witchsight*

Rogue

"Treasure hunters, pathfinders, thugs, diplomats, swindlers, innkeepers, spies – all of them rogues!"

Radomei Dalg, bitter guard captain in Yndaros.

IN AMBRIA THE WORD "rogue" is used broadly and refers to all who "steal" something from others, be it their trust, secrets, money or life. The calling of the Warrior, to proudly face the opponent face-to-face, is an exception to this rule: it is the sneaky assassin that counts among the thieving Rogues. In essence, warriors, craftsmen and scholars are the ideal occupations among the Ambrians; the rest are more or less regarded as rogues.

ROGUES AND THE RACES

People at large would say that changelings and goblins are synonymous with rogues, and are usually surprised when they realize that ogres and humans can also be found amongst their number.

ROGUE ATTRIBUTES

Craftiness (*Cunning*) or reflexes (*Quick*) are what keep most Rogues alive. While discretion is never out of place in their line of work, it is far from their most prominent feature; instead a certain amount of curiosity about the outside world (*Vigilant*) is usually found among them. Some Rogues even find that the best life insurance is a smooth tongue and witty remarks (*Persuasive*).

ROGUE ABILITIES

Rogues usually have more than one string to their bow and many tend to be versatile rather than specialized. Two characters might share a common field but remain different from one another based on their chosen abilities. What Rogues do have in common is that they prefer to surprise and use knowledge, cunning and skill to stack the odds in their favor.

The following abilities are common among Rogues, sorted according to Attributes.

- **Accurate:** *Marksman, Natural Warrior, Polearm Mastery, Steel Throw, Twin-attack*
- **Cunning:** *Alchemy, Beast Lore, Medicus, Poisoner, Loremaster, Strangler, Tactician*
- **Discreet:** *Backstab, Feint*
- **Persuasive:** *Dominate, Leader*
- **Quick:** *Acrobatics, Quick Draw*
- **Resolute:** *Steadfast*
- **Strong:** *Steadfast*
- **Vigilant:** *Sixth Sense, Witchsight*
- **General:** *Equestrian, Exceptional Attribute, Recovery, Ritualist*

CHARLATAN

"Two drops a day and you'll never be ill again!"

You have chosen the social arena as your battlefield. There, your quick tongue is your sharpest weapon and your confidence-inspiring eyes your best shield. If these should fail, then you had better trust in your light weapons and sneaky moves.

- **Important Attributes:** *Quick* 13+, *Discreet* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Human (usually Ambrian) or changeling
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Acrobatics, Backstab, Feint, Twin Attack*

WITCHHUNTER

"I'd rather put an innocent in the dirt than have a blight beast walk upon it."

You have dedicated your life to fighting blight beasts, maybe as a consequence of having your own life torn apart by the growing and infectious darkness: a farm burned to the ground, the grave of your family, a friend's horrendous transformation – something that reminds you of what will happen if the power of the blighted ones is not broken in time. You will stop at nothing in your fight against evil: you wield steel, fire and maybe even rituals learned from defeated sorcerers. You realize that the use of mystical powers may ultimately corrupt you too, but you turn a blind eye to that and instead fight on with the fervor of the fanatic.

- **Important Attributes:** *Resolute* 13+, *Cunning* or *Accurate* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Human
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Beast Lore*, *Marksman*, *Ritualist*, *Steadfast*

THUG

"Your money or your blood – your choice!"

The eastern districts of Yndaros are a wilderness as dangerous as Davokar, and just as rewarding for those who know how to harvest its fruits. You grew up on streets whose gangs have taught you the art of making a profit from others' hard work, right under the noses of the city watch. Other thugs rise through the ranks by becoming employed by barons or counts, free to act as ruffians and enforcers without being bothered by the Queen's watchmen.

- **Important Attributes:** *Quick* 13+, *Cunning* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Human, ogre or goblin
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Acrobatics, Poisoner, Strangler, Twin Attack*

TREASURE-HUNTER

"This altar... I wonder if you can't push it sideways..."

The depths of Davokar hide many treasures; to locate, salvage and return them to civilization is your bread and butter. You dream of overgrown ruins and fantasize about sunken temples. Unlike many others, you have proven yourself willing to risk your life in order to succeed. You have developed an impressive set of skills in order to do just that and there are few situations within Davokar for which you have not prepared a strategy.

- **Important Attributes:** *Cunning* 13+, *Quick* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Human, ogre or goblin
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Acrobatics*, *Alchemy*, *Steel Throw*, *Tactician*

RANGER

"Anything that lives can be tracked. And brought down..."

Your home is in the deep forest or the mountain valley, where you hunt beasts for food and fur or to protect inhabitants and travelers from harm. You have learned how to stay clear of your enemies' reach while your arrows still find their mark.

- **Important Attributes:** *Vigilant* 13+, *Discreet* 11+
- **Suggested race:** Barbarian or changeling
- **Appropriate abilities:** *Acrobatics*, *Beast Lore*, *Marksman*, Sixth Sense

Attributes

THE ATTRIBUTES are the backbone of the character, the core of its game mechanics. Simply put: whenever a character attempts to perform an action of dramatic significance, the player has to make a success test – the action is successful if the player rolls less than or equal to the value in one of the character's Attributes. This chapter describes the eight Attributes and how they are used within the game.

The Attributes

ATTRIBUTES ARE USED to determine just how prepared a character is to face different kinds of challenges in the game world. A character's value in an Attribute, such as *Strong* or *Quick*, indicates what kind of life he or she has lived growing up. In other words, the attribute values make out a fairly stable foundation which will not change dramatically but that can be built upon and refined.

ACCURATE

A character's hand-eye coordination, precision and timing are all represented by *Accurate*. This Attribute is for instance used to hit an intended target with punches, strikes, throws or a missile from a ranged weapon. *Accurate* is in most cases opposed by an enemy's *Quick*.

CUNNING

The *Cunning* Attribute represents a character's wit and knowledge, its common sense as well as actual schooling and education. You usually test *Cunning* when trying to remember facts, when solving a logical problem or puzzle, or when doing research in a library. *Cunning* is usually tested against a specific level of Difficulty, decided by the Game Master.

DISCREET

A player character's value in *Discreet* mirrors its aptitude for and training in being silent, agile and, well, discreet. This Attribute can be used to avoid being detected, to hide or smuggle something, to shadow someone or to steal something out of a person's pocket. *Discreet* is often opposed by an enemy's *Vigilant*.

PERSUASIVE

Persuasive reflects how well a player character can influence others by use of words, voice, body language and looks. The Attribute is often used when trying to persuade another person to do (or refrain from doing) something, either verbally, in writing or by song. *Persuasive* is usually opposed by an enemy's *Resolute*.

QUICK

Quick represents a character's reflexes, balance, nimbleness and how fleet-footed he or she is. It determines the order of initiative in combat and is used actively when jumping, avoiding harm and performing similar acrobatic maneuvers. *Quick* is often opposed by an enemy's *Accurate*.

Names of Attributes

Any of the Attributes can be renamed by players who wish them to suit his or her character better. *Resolute* might be better referred to as *Faithful*, *Lucky* or *Fanatical*. By the same token, *Discreet* can be *Sneaky*, *Cunning* can be *Learned* and *Vigilant* can be changed into *Paranoid*. The player decides what is best for the character.

Table 5: Examples of Success Tests

SITUATION	SYSTEM
The character sneaks up on a guard	Test the character's *Discreet*, modified by the guards *Vigilant*, written *[Discreet←Vigilant]*
An enemy is sneaking up on the character	Test the character's *Vigilant*, modified by the enemy's *Discreet*, written *[Vigilant←Discreet]*
The character enchants an enemy	Test the character's *Resolute*, modified by the enemy's *Resolute*, written *[Resolute←Resolute]*
The character gets close to a hidden trap	Test the character's Vigilant, modified by the trap's Difficulty, written *[Vigilant –X]*, where X is the trap's Difficulty

RESOLUTE

Resolute represents a character's resistance to influence, whether it is social pressure, mind-bending magic or Corruption. *Resolute* is also tied to the use of mystical powers. The Attribute is often opposed by either an enemy's *Resolute* or *Persuasive*. Note that having a very low value in this Attribute is inadvisable, because of the risk for Corruption.

STRONG

Strong mirrors a character's capacity to use its physical strength in order to, for instance, lift something heavy or break down a door. It also covers the capacity to withstand physical damage and to resist poisons and diseases. *Strong* is usually modified by a level of Difficulty, sometimes by an enemy's *Strong*.

VIGILANT

Vigilant represents a character's general awareness, the attunement of its senses and its ability to detect the details of its surroundings. *Vigilant* is often opposed by an enemy's *Discreet*.

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

The following statistics are calculated based on the character's Attributes:

- *Toughness* = *Strong* (though never below 10)
- *Pain Threshold* = *Strong*/2 (rounded up)
- *Defense* = [*Quick* –Armor's Impeding value]
- *Corruption Threshold* = *Resolute*/2 (rounded up)

THE MEANING OF LOW ATTRIBUTES

Having a low value in an Attribute is actually a great starting point for deciding a character's appearance and personality. For instance, a character with a low value in *Accurate* can be one-eyed, or generally clumsy and prone to bumping into things. A low *Cunning* value can represent both impulsiveness and a lack of education; a low *Quick* could mean that the character is either indecisive or limping. Someone with a low *Resolute* could be afraid of conflicts or perhaps very superstitious. A loud and careless character probably has a low value in *Discreet*, while a low *Vigilant* value could result in a myopic and absent-minded daydreamer.

Concerning the ←

The arrow pointing leftwards and which is used in the formula for describing challenges means "modified by". Consequently, the formula *[Quick←Accurate]* means "*Quick* modified by (the opponent's) *Accurate*", a modification which can be either positive (+) or negative (–).

Success Test

BETWEEN THEM, the Attributes can be used to undertake any kind of challenge in the game world. Sometimes they are used actively, when the character tries to achieve something; at other times they are used reactively to negate the actions of enemies or avoid being afflicted by environmental hazards. It is always the player who performs the test, whether it is made actively (the character affects the world) or passively (the world affects the character). The Game Master tells the player which Attribute must be tested and what modifications to apply (if any).

A success test is performed by rolling a 20-sided die, called a D20. In the most simple challenges success is only a matter of the die landing on a number which is equal to or lower than the character's attribute value. However, most often the attribute value is first modified according to the opposition or the difficulty of the challenge – for instance, if the character tries to hit someone with a spear, the relevant attribute value is modified by the target's *Defense*; when trying to open a lock, the attribute value is modified by how difficult the lock is to open.

In the latter case the Game Master determines the modification, typically from +5 (very easy) to –5 (very hard). When it comes to the spear attack, the actual modifier is determined with the formula *[10 –the enemy's defense value]* (see table to the right).

When a challenge is described in the text of this book it is always written with the character's Attribute first, like this: *[Character's Attribute←Modifier]*. When the modification originates from passive resistance, as in the case of a lock, it is instead written *[Character's Attribute –Modification X]*. Finally, if the test is meant to be performed without any modifications the relevant Attribute is written in plain text with an initial capital letter: *Quick*.

For more details and examples, see the narrative tutorial starting on page 237.

Attributes and Modifiers

Value	Modifier
5	+5
6	+4
7	+3
8	+2
9	+1
10	±0
11	–1
12	–2
13	–3
14	–4
15	–5

Races

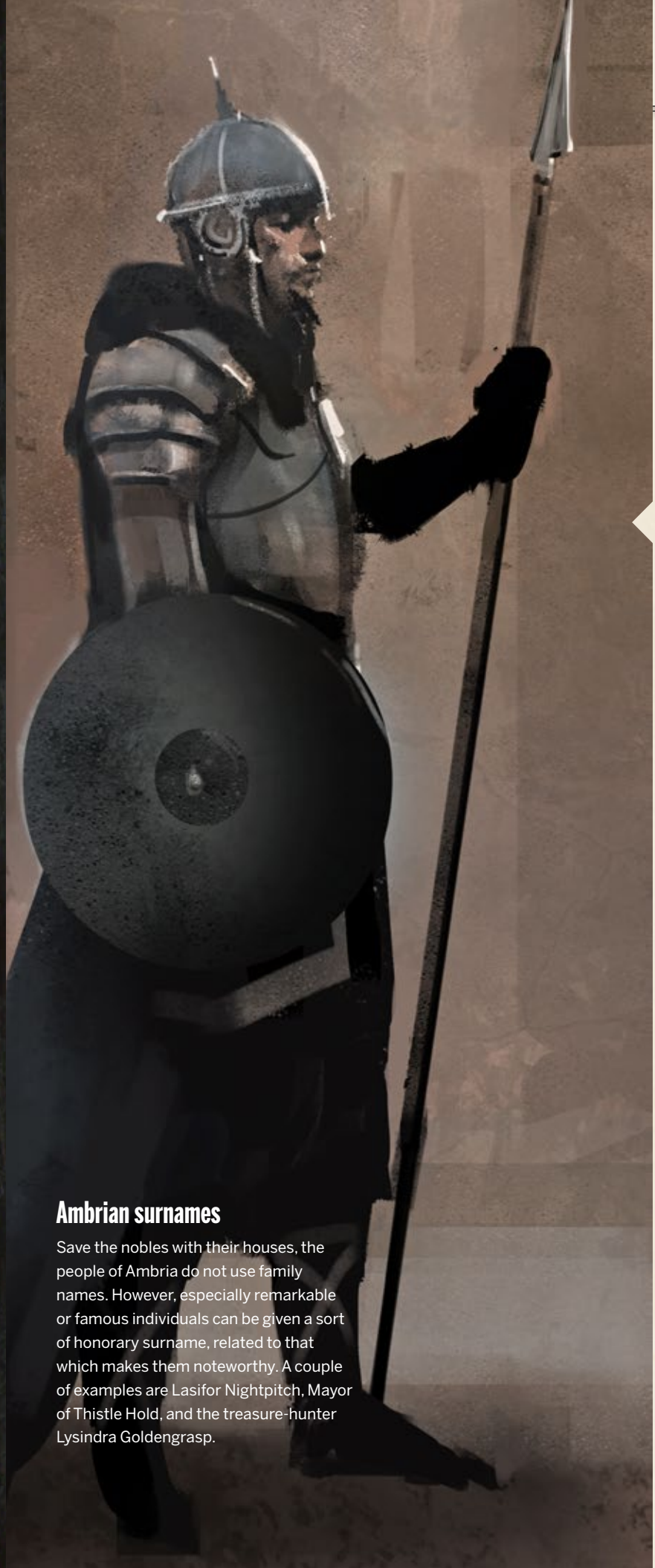
THERE ARE LOTS of strange creatures in Ambria, and even stranger life forms in the depths of Davokar. However, when creating a character with the basic ruleset, the player is limited to choosing from the races described in this chapter; races whose representatives are relatively numerous and live in or near Ambria's many towns and settlements.

Human

ACCORDING TO THE SCHOLARS of Ordo Magica, the people of Ambria and Davokar are descendants of the same tribe, although the barbarians and the Queen's Folk hardly consider themselves so closely related. Queen Korinthia's claim to Ambria, the land south of Davokar forest, is motivated by her ancestral connection to the region, and even the most novice of Ambrian linguists can explain in what ways the gibbering speech of the barbarians and the melodious tongue of the Queen's Folk are similar. More disputed are claims saying that the two peoples originate from the same stem, rooted in the old and long forgotten empire of Symbaroum whose ruins are hidden deep within Davokar.

Whatever the case, there are significant differences between the two peoples in a cultural sense. The Ambrians abandoned their blighted homeland Alberetor twenty years ago, to settle down in the well-preserved ruins of Lindaros. On their journey they brought along their architecture, knowledge, economic system and social hierarchies. Thanks to its discipline the Ambrian army outmatches the barbarian clan warriors when they meet in the open fields, but in the woods where the skill of the individual becomes a decisive factor they are more evenly matched. That, coupled with the advantage of having greater local knowledge, has so far kept the Ambrians from entering very deep into the forest – with the exception of treasure-hunters, religious fanatics searching for lost sun temples and free settlers hoping to escape the Queen's control.

Since the days of old, the barbarians have been ruled by chieftains, but have enjoyed much greater independence and freedom compared to the chastened crofters and peasants in the south. Nor do the barbarian leaders seek to enforce a strict or rigid way of life upon their subjects. The witches, the spiritual leaders among the barbarians, rule with a light hand in the form of taboos and general rules – revere nature, never abuse it and avoid the darker parts of the forest. The clans lead their lives independent from one another, with the occasional exception of skirmishes over resources in the border regions. By tradition, the clan leaders answer to the High Chieftain on the plateau of Karvosti, but he is in reality more of an arbitrator between feuding clans than a strong ruler. However, the High Chieftain is expected to lead the united barbarians to repel



Ambrian surnames

Save the nobles with their houses, the people of Ambria do not use family names. However, especially remarkable or famous individuals can be given a sort of honorary surname, related to that which makes them noteworthy. A couple of examples are Lasifor Nightpitch, Mayor of Thistle Hold, and the treasure-hunter Lysindra Goldengrasp.

any invaders, particularly the Ambrians, if it ever comes to open war.

This possibility, a united barbarian resistance commanded by the High Chieftain, gives the Queen and her advisors nightmares, and would explain why the Ambrians officially are so cautious regarding Davokar. Since the battle in Year 10, when Korinthia's troops attacked and destroyed Haloban and his Jezites, only the Templars serving the Sun Church have made any outright attacks against barbarian settlements. Most infamous is their assault on Karvosti in Year 16 when they attempted to seize the plateau with force of arms – an attempt which ended in a discouraging defeat.

AMBRIAN TRAITS

Characters of the Queen's Folk can choose either the *Contacts* or the *Privileged* trait.

AMBRIAN NAMES

Female Ambrian names usually end with –a while the male names end with –o, but there are many exceptions since their native kingdom was so extensive. One distinct exception is that the names of most Ambrian nobles ends in –gai, – goi or –mei. The use of the letter "x" is uncommon but existing and the letter "j" is replaced by the letter "i" in almost every case. The vowels e and i are used frequently.

- **Male Ambrian names:** Aro, Beremo, Demeon, Edogai, Gadramei, Iasogoi, Jomilo, Karlio, Malliano, Peonio.
- **Female Ambrian names:** Abesina, Elindra, Elionara, Levia, Mehira, Ordelia, Revina, Suria, Variol, Vidina.

BARBARIAN TRAITS

Characters of barbarian heritage can choose either the *Contacts* or the *Bushcraft* trait.

BARBARIAN NAMES

Just like the Ambrians, barbarian female names usually end with –a, while male names tend to end with –mar, –mon or – mer. It is customary that every other letter is a consonant and a vowel; double vowels are common, while double consonants are almost never used. Like the Ambrians, barbarians tend not to use the letter "j", instead changing it to "y". The greatest difference between the two people is the barbarians' love for the vowels a, o and u.

- **Male barbarian names:** Adelar, Gadramon, Haloban, Konarad, Lothar, Odaban, Rábaiamon, Taran, Tharaban, Vikomer.
- **Female barbarian names:** Adela, Aloeta, Eferneya, Elmea, Elda, Galoma, Horosa, Karona, Verama, Yagaba.

Changeling

That the elves sometimes steal a human child from its crib and place a changeling in its stead has been known amongst the barbarians for as long as the witches can remember. Since the arrival of the Ambrians, changelings have started to emerge among them as well. While a rare occurrence, it is still a traumatic experience for every family affected. It is unknown what exact purpose the elves have for doing this, but Ordo Magica's catalogue of known cases in Ambria implies that children have been taken throughout the entire population, literally from both high and low.

A changeling looks human during childhood and starts to develop more elf-like features in their adolescent years, though without ever becoming an elf in the true sense of the word. A changeling reaches adulthood at approximately the same age as a human; the changeling then continues to live a long life but apparently without taking any further steps in the life cycle of the elves. This has made some scholars develop theories stating that changelings are a race of their own, created by elven magic. Others claim that changelings indeed are elf-spawn but that their natural life cycle has been truncated in some mystical way by growing up among humans.

A changeling's lot in life is usually a hard one, since few of them are allowed to stay with their families when their true nature has been revealed. Changelings are sometimes taken in by witches or wizards to serve as assistants, but most of them end up on the street where they have to fend for themselves as best they can. Exiled from human society, the changeling wanders a long and lonely road, often bitter and dark minded, in other cases frivolous and indifferent to the hardship of others.

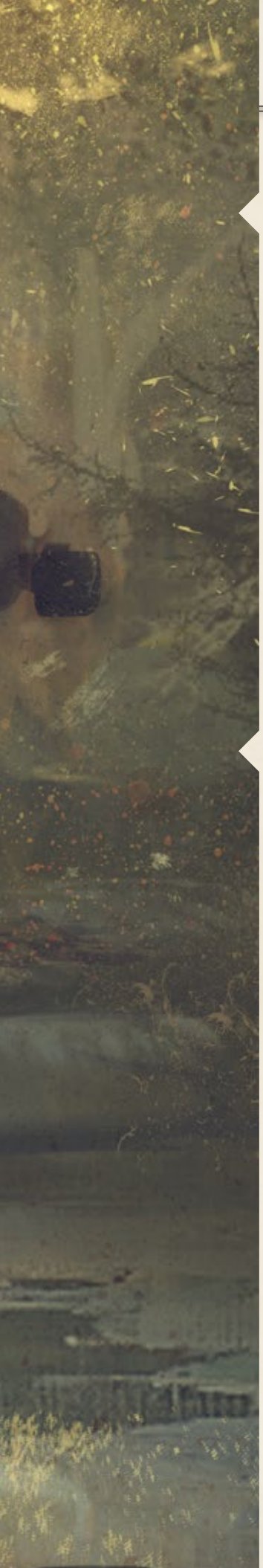
Changeling Traits

All changelings have the *Long-lived* trait and most also have the *Shapeshifter* trait (costs as an ability).

Changeling Names

Some changelings chose elven names when they are thrown out into the street or left in the forest, maybe in an attempt to reclaim a lost identity. Others – like the infamous gutter mage Grimorio Abramelin in Yndaros – take a new and often bombastic name as a defiant gesture or an expression of independence.

- **Changeling male names:** Aka, Ardri, Eneáno, Feon, Ganderald, Goriol, Ibliglin, Kalfu, Radomaramei, Sinue.
- **Changeling female names:** Bekora, Danive, Yeloéna, Elorinda, Hinéua, Kinlegelana, Riamata, Roha, Seanua, Varaneia.



Ogre

OGRES ARE SOLITARY and odd creatures that come wandering out of the depths of Davokar, fully grown but devoid of memories and with no sense of identity. It is up to the humans or goblins who eventually take them in to give them a name and teach them the ways of the world.

The tales told of ogres vary from being hilarious through mystical to horrific. What is known is that the witches of Davokar sometimes take ogres under their wings and raise them to be guards and servants. Explorers have also reported that an Ambrian outpost near the Black Pitch Mire has adopted an ogre called Armstout and the soldiers there have the giant dig ditches, lift heavy equipment and draw the plow from time to time. A similar phenomenon is the ogres that are snatched by goblin gangs in the slums of Yndaros to serve as heavy-handed enforcers.

In southern Davokar they tell of the companions Deterror and Vitrona, the latter a skillful scout employed by the witches and the former a huge ogre and the scout's best friend. Word of the duo has also reached Thistle Hold where they have become the subjects of a series of popular songs, telling about their adventures in the ruins of Symbaroum.

OGRE TRAITS

All ogres have the *Long-lived* and *Pariah* traits. Most have the *Robust* trait as well (costs as an ability).

OGRE NAMES

Ogres seem to lack any given names and are therefore nicknamed by people around them. These nicknames often allude to the ogres' size or the taciturn calm that many mistake for stupidity. Ordo Magica speculates that such lonesome creatures actually have no use for proper names – the ogre knows who it is and that is enough.

- **Ogre names:** Bauta, Ugly, Angry, Odd, Gawky, Heavy, Big Brute, Roughneck, Freak, Oaf, Ox, Rageor.

Goblin

LITTLE IS KNOWN about the origin of goblins, but their presence in the southern outskirts of Davokar is quite obvious. The tribe that left the darkness of Davokar to settle down close to Thistle Hold swarms and makes such a racket that they have made themselves quite unpopular among the town's human populace. Their fiery temperament and strange ways of socializing have contributed to the disapproval: "Hide the Boot", "Tame the Ogre", "Trim the Thistle", "Tighten the Temple" and "Want a Smack, Molok?" are party games that outsiders are reluctant to even watch.

The life of a goblin is short – a goblin is considered a youngster at the age of five, adult at ten and an elder at the age of twenty. To meet a thirty-year-old goblin is a rarity, as most of them voluntarily return to seek a lonesome death in Davokar before then. Meeting one who is forty is all but unheard of.

The only reason why goblins are tolerated in Thistle Hold is that they are practical when it comes to doing dirty work like draining marshes, emptying latrines and flailing about on scaffoldings. Thanks to that, a gibbering horde of sinewy goblins flows into the town every morning to work hard with a number of heavy, dangerous or thankless tasks. Come nightfall, they are once again driven away, and a bunch of uncharacteristically silent goblins march back to their beds in simple huts of straw and clay.

Some goblins stray from this pattern, mainly treasure-hunters and goblins employed in the households of wealthy individuals in Thistle Hold. A dozen or so goblin younglings can also be found in the convent school in the capital city, where a handful of extremely patient monks have committed themselves to save whatever soul resides inside the wild whelps. The most renowned goblin to represent both of these phenomena is Garm Wormwriggler, brought up at the convent school to later become a successful treasure-hunter.

GOBLIN TRAITS

All goblins have both the *Short-lived* and *Pariah* traits. Most have the *Survival Instinct* trait as well (costs as an ability).

GOBLIN NAMES

Goblin names are varied and it is hard to see any clear naming conventions. It is also common for goblins to change their names or add a syllable depending on what they experience in life. If one were to attempt to point out something general regarding their names, it would be that the length of the names usually goes hand-in-hand with the bearer's rank – the longer the name, the higher the status within the tribe.

- **Goblin male names:** Alfbolg, Barra, Goltas, Illefons, Ler, Rosti, Shigg, Tengel, Ul.
- **Goblin female names:** Aa, Fosa, Guhula, Hugalea, Tulga, Udelia, Ufa, Wamba, Yla, Yppa.

Traits

THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES the different traits that representatives of the playable races either have or can have. Some of the traits only have one level and come automatically with the selection of a race, at no additional cost in creation points. Others function and cost as abilities, aside from the fact that they are tied to a certain race. Such a trait is optional and the player decides whether or not to purchase it when creating the character.

CONTACTS

The character has served in an organization or traveled far and wide, and has therefore spun a wide web of contacts. With a successful roll against *Persuasive*, the character can call to mind a contact that should be able to help with a specific question or in a precarious situation. The contact may not be available directly – that depends on who is included in the web of contacts. Suitable factions and people when it comes to specifying the character's contacts are: the Queen's Army, the Queen's Rangers, Witches, Ordo Magica, the Church of Prios, the Noble Houses and Treasure Hunters.

BUSHCRAFT

The character can survive on meager resources and is used to finding food and shelter in harsh terrain.

With a successful *Vigilant* test, the character can find enough food and water to feed him- or herself while being on the move in the wilderness or among Davokar's ruins. If the character is part of a small group (up to five individuals), food and water can be found for them as well, but that will take much more time. The group cannot be on the move during that time.

LONG-LIVED

Once adulthood is reached, the aging process of the character slows down. The character can live up to two or even three centuries if its life is not shortened by violence, poison or disease. The creature's long lifespan makes it prone to do things at a slow pace, but this is compensated by the attitude that what is worth doing is worth doing well, which over time results in a considerable degree of expertise.

Long-lived has no effect besides what it implies in terms of playing the role.

PARIAH

The character belongs to a race which is ill-reputed among the ruling majority and is more or less openly discriminated against. Lone individuals in society might be less inclined to prejudice, but the character's social interactions are generally hampered. Persecuted groups tend to stand together against the world and provide each other with aid and support.

When taking on a social challenge, the player has to roll twice and pick the worst result to decide the outcome of the test. On the other hand, the character is awarded a second chance to succeed

while interacting with members of its own race, in which case it only has to roll the dice when it strives to accomplish something which is questionable or next to impossible to achieve.

Additionally, the character starts with only five shillings in its purse.

PRIVILEGED

The character belongs to a race of high social standing within its society, and is therefore given advantages that others simply cannot have or must pay for, in either silver or hard work, to obtain.

The character gets a second chance to succeed when taking on social challenges within its own society, and does not have to roll the dice unless it strives to accomplish something which is questionable or that may be next to impossible to achieve.

Additionally, the character starts with 50 thaler in its purse.

ROBUST

The character belongs to a race of creatures that are naturally tall and often continue to grow their entire lives. But there are variations: some grow quickly, others more slowly while some hardly seems to grow at all.

Novice	**Special.** The character is close to seven feet tall and very strong. Such a towering body is easier to hit in combat, which is balanced by a greater natural toughness. The character's *Defense* is based on *[Quick –2]* and it can only use light armor, which must be custom-made and therefore costs twice the normal price. In return, the character naturally ignores 1D4 damage from each hit taken, in addition to any armor it wears. Furthermore, it can deal 1D4 extra damage with one melee attack each turn.
Adept	**Special.** The character is over eight feet tall, weighs about 500 pounds and has skin as though as bark. A creature like this packs quite the punch but is also easy to hit. The character's *Defense* is based on *[Quick –3]* and it can only use light armor, which must be custom-made and costs three times the normal price. In return, the character naturally ignores 1D6 damage from each hit taken, in addition to any armor it wears. Furthermore, it can deal 1D6 extra damage with one melee attack each turn.
Master	**Special.** The character is close to ten feet tall, weighs about half a ton and crushes lesser creatures while enemy weapons have a hard time penetrating its stone-like skin. It

Pariah

Robust

is very easy to hit a creature of this size, but equally hard to wound it seriously. The character's *Defense* is based on *[Quick –4]* and it can only use light armor (custom-made, costing four times the normal price). In return, the character ignores 1D8 damage from each hit taken, in addition to any armor it wears. Finally, it can deal 1D8 extra damage with one melee attack each turn.

SHAPESHIFTER

The character has the capability to borrow the appearance of others for a period of time. For young changelings this ability comes naturally, and it can be hard for them not to adopt the appearance and mannerisms of people around them. Mature changelings usually develop greater control over the trait.

Novice	**Free.** With a successful die roll against *Resolute*, the character may adopt a false shape; the form, appearance, voice and clothes of another creature, but not that of a specific individual. The changeling can keep up the appearance for the duration of a scene, but then the illusion fades away. Everyone that the character interacts with will see through the illusion, unless the character succeeds with a *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test.
Adept	**Free.** The character may, for a short period of time and with a successful *Resolute* test, adopt the form of specific individuals that the character has met, and can include clothes and attributes in the image. In combat against multiple opponents, the similarity is good enough to make it hard for enemies to hit their mark – there is a 50% chance that enemies attempting to hit the character hit their depicted companion instead. It takes concentration to maintain the illusory form, which means that the character must make a *Resolute* test each turn as well as a successful *[Resolute –Damage]* test each time the changeling suffers damage.
Master	**Free.** With a successful *Resolute* test the character may adopt the form of a specific individual and maintain it for the duration of a scene. Anyone who speaks with the character will be able to see through the illusion unless the character succeeds with a *[Discreet←Vigilant]*. For a character to be able to fool people familiar with the depicted person, he or she must succeed with two tests, first at a distance and then another one if they start a conversation.

Writing carved into the stone foundation of Otra Dorno and, though difficult to decipher, believed to contain the symbol for what is presumed to read "massacre" or "blood bath".

SHORT-LIVED

The character's life is short, even under favorable living conditions. All members of its race tend to reach adulthood in a handful of years, after which they start to lose their youthful vigor so that only a few ever live to see the age of forty. On the other hand, they are quick to learn and adapt to new surroundings, and they are often ready to face the world at the age of five.

Short-lived has no effect besides what it implies in terms of playing the role.

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

The character belongs to a race with a powerful life-force and an equally powerful will to survive. For some individuals this energy shows itself in clamorous hollering and an acute restlessness; for others it manifests itself in a more useful survival instinct.

Novice	**Free.** Thanks to its explosive survival instinct, the character may perform one extra Movement Action once per scene.
Adept	**Reaction.** The character trusts its instincts and has learned that rolling with the punches often saves your life. The character's finely honed survival instinct provides it with a permanent +1D4 to Armor.
Master	**Free.** There resides a powerful fighting spirit within each member of the character's race, and that spirit can show itself when the character is backed into a corner. The character has nurtured this hot-tempered aggression and may sacrifice a Movement Action once per scene to perform an extra Combat Action.

Abilities

THE ABILITIES are what really give a character in Symbaroum its distinct role and place in the game world. They represent a person's skill in utilizing his/her basic attributes as efficiently as possible and are graded in three levels from novice to master.

View from within one of the Earth Towers of the Black Leech Rift. There are different estimates on exactly how deep down they reach, but rumors say between three and six hundred feet.

SOME ABILITIES are almost exclusively meant for combat, while others are more focused on problem-solving. Many can be used for both, in which case this is stated in the description of the ability. Also note that many abilities require the player to spend different kinds of Actions – read more about this in the chapter Player's Rules (page 158).

Abilities are rated in three levels: Novice, Adept and Master. An Adept may of course use the ability's Novice level effect, while a Master can make use of all three levels of the ability.

All abilities are described using the same template, with keywords defined as follows:

- **Active Action:** The ability is an attack or similar Combat Action. Some of the active abilities generate extra Actions. These extra Actions may not be used to perform an additional active Action, but they benefit from any passive abilities that the character may have.
- **Free Action:** This Action may be used an unlimited number of times per turn in addition to a character's usual two Actions, for as long as it is allowed by any conditions specified in the description of the ability.
- **Passive Action:** The ability does not require a Combat Action to be activated; in other words, the ability is always active. If a character has two or more passive abilities, then they are all considered active at the same time.
- **Reaction:** The ability is a Reaction to some other Action and therefore doesn't count against the two Actions a character can perform each turn. Reactive Actions work outside the usual order of Initiative, since a Reaction is performed as a consequence of a triggering Action, regardless of Initiative. Reactions can always make use of passive abilities, but never active ones.
- **Special Action:** The ability works in a special way, detailed in its description.

ACROBATICS

The character has learned the art of acrobatic maneuvering, having spent time with a theater company, in one of the fencing schools of Yndaros or climbing the trees of Davokar. The nimbleness of the acrobat provides an advantage when trying to withdraw from close combat or when quickly wanting to reach the center of an enemy formation.

Novice **Reaction.** The character may roll against *Quick* to avoid Free Attacks from enemies in melee combat, either when trying to slip past an enemy or when attempting to withdraw from melee. Should the test fail, the player must choose to either remain in its original place or to move anyway and suffer a Free Attack from the opponent.

Adept **Free.** If the character is knocked down he or she may attempt to jump back up again as a Free Action by making a *Quick* test. If the test fails the character has to spend a Movement Action to get back on its feet, as usual.

Master **Reaction.** The character can utilize its enemies as shields in battle. In combat with more than one opponent, the character may once per turn use an enemy as a shield and have that enemy suffer a successful hit instead of the character. That opponent cannot defend against the attack, but the master acrobat has to make a successful roll against *Quick* for the enemy to take the hit.

ALCHEMY

The character is schooled in the mysteries of alchemy. With the right ingredients, the character can prepare various elixirs to help it survive in the dark depths of Davokar. A list of alchemical mixtures and potions are featured in Chapter 16: Equipment (page 153).

In problem-solving situations, *Alchemy* can be used to identify drugs and poisons and to gain clues as to where they come from. Other than that, the character may attempt to prepare an elixir once per adventure. This attempt can be performed before the start of an adventure or at any appropriate moment during the adventure – for example when traveling through a forest or when passing through a cave where potent ingredients may be found.

Novice **Special.** With a successful roll against *Cunning* the character can gather herbs and minerals to create one dose of a novice elixir.

Adept **Special.** As an acknowledged alchemist the character can roll against *Cunning* to gather herbs and minerals to create one dose of an adept elixir or 1D4 doses of a novice elixir.

Master **Special.** The character can, as a widely renowned alchemist, roll against *Cunning* to gather herbs and minerals to create one dose of a master elixir, 1D4 doses of an adept elixir or 1D8 doses of a novice elixir.

Elixirs

NOVICE ELIXIRS
Antidote (Weak)
Herbal Cure
Poison (Weak)
Waybread

ADEPT ELIXIRS
Antidote (Moderate)
Choking Spores
Elemental Essence
Eye Drops
Ghost Candle
Magic Concentrate
Poison (Moderate)
Protective Oil

MASTER ELIXIRS
Antidote (Strong)
Elixir of Life
Poison (Strong)
Spore Bomb
Wraith Dust

BACKSTAB

The palace of Yndaros, the alleys of Thistle Hold and the gloom of Davokar are extremely different surroundings, but they have at least one thing in common: when arguments fail, the blades speak up. The character has learned how to exploit weaknesses in an enemy's defense, and will not let an opportunity go by without making a *Backstab*.

Novice **Reaction.** One attack per turn made from Advantage deals +1D4 damage in addition to any damage already inflicted thanks to the Advantage. The character may use *Discreet* instead of *Accurate* when making attacks while at an Advantage. *Backstab* may only be performed once per turn, regardless of other circumstances.

Adept **Reaction.** The character's *Backstab* deals extra damage (as above) and also causes a bleeding wound to the enemy. The attack opens a wound that bleeds heavily, inflicting 1D4 damage each turn following the attack. The enemy continues to bleed until healed by an herbal cure, the *Medicus* ability or in some other way.

Master **Reaction.** The character's *Backstab* deals 1D8 extra damage and causes a bleeding wound to the enemy, just like at adept level. There are no longer any limits to how many backstabs a Master can perform each turn. All attacks are backstabs as long as the conditions for Advantage are met (see page 162).

BEAST LORE

The character is schooled in the lore of beasts and knows the secrets of most monsters. Many monsters possess special abilities and unique attacks as well as weaknesses which are good to know about when trying to bring them down. At higher levels the character must pick a specialization – Abominations, Beasts, Cultural Beings or Undead – and receives further advantages against members of that specific category.

A character with *Beast Lore* can identify the tracks of many monsters and beings, and use that

information to draw conclusions regarding the size and general behavior of the creature – is it hunting, on the run or just passing through?

Novice **Free.** The character has studied monsters and can make a *Cunning* test to recognize or recollect a monster's strengths and weaknesses. The Game Master describes the monster and its statistics to the player.

Adept **Free.** The character is an acknowledged scholar that has been studying a particular sub-category of monsters (pick Abominations, Beasts, Cultural Beings or Undead). The character now deals 1D4 additional damage to monsters from that category. This extra damage applies to the character's allies as well, if they have been instructed in how best to fight the creature.

Master **Free.** The character now deals 1D6 extra damage to creatures from the sub-category that the player picked at the adept level. This extra damage applies to the character's allies as well, if they have been instructed in how best to fight the creature.

BERSERKER

The feared barbarian warriors of Davokar have developed the practice of working themselves into a berserker frenzy before battle. By letting the repressed anger of the heart strengthen its limbs, the character can unleash a fuming rage that, if channeled correctly, might determine which side will emerge victorious from the battle.

Novice **Free.** As a Free Action, the character may enter into a murderous frenzy to solely focus on hurting the enemy, dealing 1D6 extra damage when fighting in melee combat. The downside of this frenzy is that the character cannot defend itself properly. The attribute on which *Defense* is based, is considered to be 5 when calculating *Defense*.

Adept **Reaction.** The rage is like armor to the character. He or she ignores 1D4 damage from each hit suffered while in a berserker rage.

Master **Free.** The character has managed to harness its rage without losing any of its power. The character can utilize this capacity to both deal and ignore extra damage, while still being able to defend itself as normal.

BODYGUARD

High-born Ambrians, rich merchant lords and other potentates surround themselves with bodyguards. Even among the barbarians there are housecarls who serve to protect the life of their chieftain. The character is trained to place itself in the way of painful strikes and lethal blows aimed at the protected person.

Novice **Reaction.** With a successful *Resolute*, the character may take blows directed against an ally. The character may not defend itself against these attacks, they hit automatically.

Adept **Reaction.** As Novice, but the character's capacity as a guardian allows it to defend itself against all attacks aimed at the person he or she is protecting.

Master **Reaction.** As Adept, but the character is a veritable guardian saint. As a Reaction, the master *Bodyguard* also gets to make a Free Attack against anyone making a melee attack aimed at the person under its protection.

DOMINATE

With nothing but presence, gaze and voice, strong personalities can force weaker minds to bend in the midst of a raging battle. The character is trained in this art of subduing combat. Among the gladiators of Yndaros, this is considered to be a particularly impressive way to win a battle, and it is even regarded as extremely honorable among the barbarian clans to overcome your enemy in such a manner.

In social situations, this ability can also be used to scare someone into obedience and force secrets out of them.

Novice **Passive.** The character can dominate and outmaneuver an enemy combatant by using its convincing personality. The character may use *Persuasive* instead of *Accurate* in melee combat.

Adept **Free.** The character can, as a Free Action and with a successful *[Persuasive←Resolute]* test, force an enemy to hesitate in melee combat. A hesitating enemy will not attack the character this turn. If possible, it attacks one of the character's allies instead.

Master **Active.** The character can subdue an enemy with a passed *[Persuasive←Resolute]* test. A subdued enemy can be forced to stand down and negotiate, to flee from an ongoing battle (if possible), or surrender if it is impossible to flee. When already in combat, the enemy must first be wounded by the character or by one of the character's allies before it can be subdued.

Monster categories

ABOMINATIONS
The horrible twisted life forms unique to Davokar.

BEASTS
All animals and creatures that belong to nature, such as wolves, reptiles and spider-like pests.

CULTURAL BEINGS
Humans, elves, changelings, ogres, goblins and trolls, for example.

UNDEAD
All manner of restless dead, such as ghosts and dragouls of any kind.

EQUESTRIAN

Heavy cavalry dominates the plains of Ambria, a truth proven time and again by Queen Korinthia when she sent her armored horsemen against stubborn barbarians during the first decade of her invasion. It takes training to be able to use a mount in combat, both for the rider and the mount, but if they are able to work together as one, they become a deadly combination. This ability is also efficiently used by the barbarians of the western plains, who launch raids against the settlements of western Ambria using their horse-drawn chariots.

A character with the *Equestrian* ability also has a good hand with other kinds of farm animals and the like, and can therefore use the ability to calm agitated beasts, for instance keeping watch dogs from barking.

Novice	**Reaction.** The character is an experienced rider and used to fighting while mounted. The character knows how to use the weight of the mount in a cavalry charge and deals 1D6 additional damage with one melee attack if the mount moves prior to the attack.
Adept	**Active.** The bond between a mount and its rider makes it possible for them to make sweeping attacks, meaning that they use parts of their Move Action before an attack, and the rest afterwards. This way, they are able to perform a melee attack without being locked into melee combat. The enemy can only retaliate by using Reactions, or by spending their Movement Action trying to catch up with the rider.
Master	**Reaction.** The master rider can use a cavalry charge even more effectively and therefore deals +1D10 damage with one melee attack if the mount moves prior to the attack.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTE

All the character's senses, as well as its physical and mental capacity, can be improved. By practicing a little bit each day, the muscles can grow stronger, the eyes sharper and intellect vaster. This ability enhances the character's basic survival capability.

This ability may be chosen multiple times, each time related to a different Attribute.

Novice	**Special.** The character has cultured one of its Attributes through hard work, which increases the Attribute value by +1.
Adept	**Special.** As novice, but the ability increases the Attribute value by +2 in total.
Master	**Special.** As novice, but the ability increases the Attribute value by +3 in total.

FEINT

Persons and creatures that lack the will or strength to wield heavy melee weapons have instead developed techniques for feinting. This ability demands a weapon with either the Short or the Precise quality. Thanks to the skill of the character, these weapons can be handled in a both discreet and confusing manner.

Novice	**Passive.** The character can choose to attack with *Discreet* instead of *Accurate* when the attack is made with a melee weapon which is either Short or Precise. Also, every such attack gains the same *Advantage* as if the opponent was surprised.
Adept	**Reaction.** The character presents a false weakness in its defense and tricks the opponent into attacking that weakness. The character can choose to defend itself with *Discreet* instead of *Quick*.
Master	**Active.** With a successful roll against *[Discreet←Vigilant]* the character can surprise an enemy in the middle of an ongoing fight. A successful test gives the character a Free Attack against that enemy in addition to its ordinary attack. The character may still perform an ordinary attack even if the attempted *Feint* fails.

IRON FIST

The character is trained to use its strength for maximum effect on a target in melee combat. Knights, members of the barbarian Wrathguard and other heavily armed warriors rely on their strength in combat and leave precision and finesse for others to worry about.

Novice	**Passive.** The character can fully utilize its strength and therefore uses *Strong* instead of *Accurate* when making melee attacks.
Adept	**Passive.** The character's melee attacks now deal 1D4 additional damage.
Master	**Active.** The character knows how to truly put its back into an attack. The character can perform a devastating melee attack once per turn that delas +1D8, instead of +1D4, additional damage.

LEADER

There are many who fight their way to a position of leadership, but there are few who get pointed out as true leaders by the people they are meant to lead. If equipped with this ability the character is an inspiring, charismatic and eloquent person whom others listen to and follow, sometimes to their death.

Outside of combat, the *Leader* ability can be useful to seize command over a group of strangers, organize a militia and the like.

Novice **Passive.** Due to its strong personality, the character can use *Persuasive* in place of *Resolute*, for instance when weaving mystical powers, though not as a basis for the corruption threshold.

Adept **Active.** The character can nominate a creature or an object to be the focused target of his or her allies for the duration of a scene. All allies who attack that target inflict 1D4 additional damage with each hit. Changing the target requires a new active Action from the *Leader*.

Master **Active.** The *Leader* gives a rousing speech to its allies. This allows them to use his or her *Persuasive* instead of their own *Resolute* for the duration of a scene.

LOREMASTER

The character is educated and well-versed in the ways of the world: its cultures, its history, languages and artifacts. For centuries heroes, monsters and kingdoms have come and gone and left behind powerful items and secret texts. This ability represents knowledge about such objects. Through extensive studies a character with this ability knows not only the story of an object but also its properties and applications.

The *Loremaster* ability also makes the character skilled at researching records and administrative documents, something which might be very useful when faced with those kinds of problems and puzzles.

Novice **Free.** With a successful *Cunning* test, a *Loremaster* can figure out the properties of a specific artifact without being bound to it. In the same way, the novice can use *Cunning* to translate a text or understand what is being said in another human language. A character does not need to make a test when uttering simple words and phrases, but a successful roll against *Cunning* is required when trying to have a proper conversation.

Adept **Free.** The character is a cultivated scholar of artifacts – in cases when an artifact power is activated by a simple attribute test, the adept can roll against *Cunning* instead of whichever attribute is specified in the description of the power. Also, with a successful *Cunning* test, the adept can read and understand the ungainly tongues of

Table 6: Abilities

ABILITY	COMMON FOR
Acrobatics	Warrior, Rogue
Alchemy	Mystic, Rogue
Backstab	Rogue
Beast Lore	Mystic, Rogue
Berserker	Warrior
Bodyguard	Warrior
Dominate	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Equestrian	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Exceptional Attribute	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Feint	Rogue
Iron Fist	Warrior
Leader	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Loremaster	Mystic, Rogue
Marksman	Warrior, Rogue
Man-at-arms	Warrior
Medicus	Mystic, Rogue
Mystical Power	Mystic
Natural Warrior	Warrior
Poisoner	Mystic, Rogue
Polearm Mastery	Warrior, Rogue
Quick Draw	Warrior, Rogue
Recovery	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Ritualist	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Shield Fighter	Warrior
Sixth Sense	Warrior, Rogue
Sorcery	Mystic
Steadfast	Warrior, Mystic, Rogue
Steel Throw	Warrior, Rogue
Strangler	Rogue
Tactician	Mystic, Rogue
Theurgy	Mystic
Twin Attack	Warrior, Rogue
Two-handed Force	Warrior
Witchcraft	Mystic
Witchsight	Mystic, Rogue
Wizardry	Mystic

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and he who was called 'first among equals' was nevertheless the fastest, the toughest and the most skilled with the spear; he was Maiesticar, the pillager who thrust Spiderbane at the heart of the Spider King, and all the way through."

Ability and Powers

A clarification may be warranted regarding the ability *Mystical Power* and the actual powers presented with start on page 130. Each of the latter represent one purchase of the ability in question: if your character learns both *Lay on Hands* and *Holy Aura*, this means it learns two different versions of the ability *Mystical Power*. What is in common for all powers is included in the ability; what is specific is detailed in the description of the powers.

both elves and trolls. To say simple phrases in Elvish or Troll Tongue requires no test, but to initiate a conversation requires a successful roll against *Cunning*.

Master **Free.** As an acknowledged interpreter of scrolls, the character may with a successful roll against *Cunning* activate mystical powers directly from scrolls and parchments. The *Loremaster* may also use *Cunning* instead of *Resolute* to resist mystical effects. Furthermore, the master is familiar with the secrets of Symbaroum. A successful *Cunning* test is required to be able to read a text written in its ancient and extinct language. It requires no test to utter simple phrases, but to initiate a conversation requires a successful roll against *Cunning*.

MAN-AT-ARMS

A real warrior wears armor and is trained in how to move and fight while doing so. This is true among Ambrians and barbarians alike, even if the most heavily armored warriors usually are of Ambrian stock. No matter what the armor is made from, be it leather, steel or any other material, the *Man-at-arms* ability gives the character increased protection against hostile strikes and blows.

Novice **Passive.** The character knows how to use its armor for maximum effect, which increases the armor's Armor tier by one step: light armor protects 1D6, medium armor protects 1D8 and heavy armor protects 1D10.

Adept **Passive.** The character is used to wearing armor and can adapt his or hers actions to its limitations. The armor no longer has a negative effect on *Quick* or abilities based on *Quick* (including *Defense*). The Impeding quality of the armor still has a negative effect when using mystical powers.

Master **Reaction.** The character may roll against *Quick* to counteract effects from Abilities or equipment that make enemy attacks ignore or reduce its Armor value; if the test is successful the Armor protects as usual. Mystical powers that ignore Armor may not be blocked this way; they are not affected by the *Man-at-arms* ability.

MARKSMAN

Marksmen have their natural position in every army, scouting party and band of brigands. The character can inflict serious damage on its enemies with a bow or crossbow, hoping to either bring them down or at least make sure that they do not reach those of the character's allies that are equipped for melee combat.

Novice **Passive.** Thanks to the character's skill, damage dealt with bows and crossbows is increased to 1D10 and 1D12 respectively, from the usual 1D8 and 1D10.

Adept **Active.** The character's precision provides his or her projectiles a crippling effect. The attack deals damage as usual and if the target is wounded the character may make an *[Accurate←Strong]* test every time the target attempts to move. A successful test means that the target cannot move and its Movement Action is forfeit. As soon as the target manages to move (the character fails the test), the crippling effect is gone.

Master **Active.** The master's projectiles become armor piercing. The shot hits a weak spot and completely ignores the target's Armor.

MEDICUS

The character is schooled in the art of healing and therefore a greatly coveted asset in its society, whether he or she keeps diseases from spreading, takes care of wounded warriors or tends to the ruling elite. The art of healing has been developed in parallel with alchemy, and many healers are also trained in alchemy for this reason, especially those who operate far from civilization where there are no herbal cures to buy from well-stocked merchants.

A character with the *Medicus* ability can diagnose and cure diseases and identify a poison by its symptoms. *Medicus* also gives the character a coroner's point of view, which might come in handy when examining a crime scene or a dead body.

Novice **Active.** As a clever surgeon, the character can make a test against *Cunning* to heal 1D4 of a patient's *Toughness*, or 1D6 when using an herbal cure. This ability can only be used once per patient and day.

Adept **Active.** The character is an acknowledged *Medicus*. A successful *Cunning* test heals 1D6 of a patient's *Toughness*, or 1D8 when using an herbal cure. This ability can only be used once per patient and day.

Master **Active.** The master *Medicus* has a vast medical knowledge. A successful *Cunning* test now heals 1D8 *Toughness*, or 1D10 when using an herbal cure. Even a failed test heals some of the patient's *Toughness*; 1D4 when only using *Medicus* or 1D6 when also applying an herbal cure. This ability can only be used once per patient and day.

MYSTICAL POWER

The character has access to one or more mystical powers. These powers have either been obtained as a gift, a curse, through assiduous studies or as a consequence of a deep and dedicated faith. The character's power may belong to a mystical tradition (*Wizardry*, *Sorcery*, *Theurgy* or *Witchcraft*), which all have their benefits and disadvantages. The character may also be a Mystic without a tradition, with a home-brewed theory as to where these powers come from and what they are meant for. For more information see Chapter 18: Mystical Traditions (page 126).

Each *Mystical Power* is its own ability and is purchased separately. For a more detailed description of the different mystical powers, see Chapter 19: Mystical Powers (page 130).

The character suffers one point (1) of permanent Corruption each time he or she learns a new mystical power. The Corruption can be reduced if the power is part of a mystical tradition that the character belongs to. The character also suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption each time this power is used. Again, the Corruption suffered can be reduced if the power is considered a part of a tradition that the character belongs to (see Shadow & Corruption, page 174).

Novice	**Special.** The character has mastered the power's novice level.
Adept	**Special.** The character has mastered the power's adept level.
Master	**Special.** The character has mastered the power's master level.

NATURAL WARRIOR

A sword or a bow is not always needed to fight. Through long and hard training, the character has become a dangerous opponent even when unarmed. The barbarians of the forests have proud traditions of wrestling and boxing. Another example is the fighting style developed in the gutters of eastern Yndaros, a style that nowadays can be seen at the Dome since a pair of the city's renowned gladiators have embraced its techniques.

Novice	**Passive.** The character has learned to use its natural-born warrior capabilities with great efficiency. The character's unarmed attacks now deal 1D6 damage. If the creature has the Natural Weapons trait as well, then the damage is further increased according to the level of that monstrous trait.
Adept	**Active.** With the speed of an adept, the character may now perform a double attack against a single target. The two attacks are rolled separately.
Master	**Passive.** By attacking an opponent's weak points with flawless precision – such as throat and knees – the master's unarmed strikes are truly devastating. Each attack that hits deals 1D6 extra damage.

POISONER

Davokar hides many alchemically potent and poisonous plants, and the character is familiar with the effective use of poisoned weapons in combat. Poisons can be purchased from less scrupulous peddlers, but to actually brew a poison requires some understanding of alchemy (the *Alchemy* ability).

The *Poisoner* ability can be used to identify different poisons or the effect of a poison on a wounded or dead person.

Novice	**Free.** As a free action, the character can apply one dose of poison or any other alchemical elixir to a weapon. That one dose of poison is enough for one hit with the weapon before more of the poison must be applied. A *[Cunning←Strong]* test is needed for the poison to take effect; if successful the victim starts to take damage. The damage suffered per turn and the duration of the poison depends on its strength (see page 153).
Adept	**Free.** As novice, but the character understands how to make a dose of poison last an entire battle. After applying a dose, all attacks counts as poisonous for the duration of the combat scene.
Master	**Free.** The character has mastered the art of poisoning and knows how to get the most out of a poison. If the character succeeds with a *Cunning* test, any poison applied to a weapon counts as one level higher than usual. Weak poison counts as Moderate, Moderate counts as Strong. Strong poison does not deal any additional damage but gives the character a second chance to succeed with the *[Cunning←Strong]* test instead.

POLEARM MASTERY

The character is initiated in the secrets of long-shafted weapons. The spear is a simple weapon and anyone can quickly learn how to make good use of its length. For this reason, the militia armies of the plains and forests are often armed with spears.

The character's advanced skill with long weapons really shows that a simple shaft of hardened wood can be a fearsome weapon in the hands of a trained warrior.

The defensive strength of Polearm Mastery

If you want a strongly defensive character, then Polearm Mastery is not a bad option. The adept level provides Free Attacks against any enemy who attempts to come close, which is very good in a fight against multiple opponents. The master level of Polearm Mastery is one of the most powerful abilities in terms of holding enemies in check. But also note that an enemy armed with a polearm more or less cancels the effect of Polearm Mastery.

Novice **Passive.** The damage dealt by Long weapons is increased one step, to 1D10 for spears and halberds and to 1D8 for staves.

Adept **Reaction.** The character has truly mastered the long thrust. The character receives a Free Attack against all enemies who come into range of melee combat – whether it is the enemy who engages the character or vice versa is irrelevant. The only exception is when the enemy also wields a long weapon; in such a situation the character receives no Free Attack.

Master **Reaction.** As a Master of long weapons, the character has the skill to keep his or her enemies at bay. The character can use the Free Attack with a polearm to keep an enemy from coming close enough to attack. For as long as the character succeeds in hitting the enemy, the enemy remains unable to attack the character with melee weapons – whether or not the damage penetrates the enemy's armor.

QUICK DRAW

Dealing the first blow can decide the outcome of a battle, and with this ability the character has an advantage when an unexpected ambush happens. The character also becomes a much more dynamic warrior, able to quickly switch weapons to meet the demands of any situation – a skill particularly appreciated among barbarian skirmishers and Ambrian archers.

Novice **Free.** With a successful test against *Quick*, the character may unsheathe and draw a weapon as a Free Action, thereby being able to use the weapon as if it was already drawn. The character can also reload a crossbow as a Free Action with a successful *Quick* Test.

Adept **Free.** With a successful *Quick* test, the character may switch weapons as a Free Action, meaning that the character can sheathe one weapon and draw another in one fluid motion.

Master **Free.** The character handles elixirs swiftly and may with a successful *Quick* test pour one dose down its own or someone else's throat as a Free Action.

RECOVERY

Among both Black Cloaks and Mystics, meditative techniques that provide strange bodily capabilities have been developed. The character can use its inner power reserves with an almost magical self-discipline to rejuvenate the energy of its body, even when in the midst of combat.

Novice **Active.** With a successful die roll against *Resolute*, the character regains 1D4 *Toughness*. Multiple attempts can be made, but only one successful attempt is allowed per day.

Adept **Active.** Just as novice level, but the character recovers 1D6 *Toughness*.

Master **Active.** Just as adept level, but the character recovers 1D8 *Toughness*.

RITUALIST

The character has learned how mystical powers can be channeled through rituals – powerful but time-consuming magical practices. This knowledge may come from studying under a teacher or from self-studies with a ritual codex.

The character suffers one (1) permanent Corruption from each ritual it learns, except if the ritual belongs to a mystical tradition practiced by the character. In the latter case the character is spared the blight of Corruption.

When it comes to performing rituals, the character suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption if the ritual does not belong to a tradition he or she has mastered. Performing rituals covered by the character's tradition only gives one (1) point of temporary Corruption.

The *Ritualist* ability makes it possible for the character to recognize what ritual has been performed by examining symbols and components remaining on the scene, and also to deduce the effects of the ritual, even if he or she has not mastered it.

Novice **Special.** The character has learned to perform one (1) ritual. The ritual may belong to any mystical tradition, but the character must have access to the ritual in order to learn and memorize it. The knowledge may be gained from a tutor involved in the same organization as the character, from a codex found in the ruins of Symbaroum or from another ritualist who imparts the knowledge as a reward for services rendered.

Adept **Special.** The character has learned to perform up to two additional rituals (three in total), again from any mystical tradition, but bound to the same conditions as those presented at the novice level.

Master **Special.** The character has learned to perform up to three additional rituals (six rituals in total). Just as before, the Master *Ritualist* is not limited to the rituals of a single mystical tradition, but must have access to the ritual to be able to learn and memorize it.

SHIELD FIGHTER

The character is trained in how to make good use of a shield, and how to actively fight using the shield as a weapon. Behind the protection of the shield, the character can generate a great momentum to fuel its attacks, as well as strike with the shield itself. This is an effective combination which probably explains why it is so common among both barbarian and Ambrian warriors.

The buckler, the light shield usually utilized by archers, is too light to be used with the *Shield Fighter* ability. The warrior has to carry a sturdy shield made of either wood or steel to generate the required amount of force.

Novice	**Passive.** The damage dealt by weapons held in the character's sword arm is increased by one step; to 1D10 if the character fights with a single-handed weapon or to 1D8 if using a Short weapon. The novice *Shield Fighter* also wields its shield as an instrument of protection with greater efficiency and therefore receives a +2 *Defense* bonus instead of the usual +1 when using a shield.
Adept	**Reaction.** The character has learned how to combine weapon and shield so well that every successful attack may be followed up by a shield bash against the same target (separate attack roll). If it hits, the damage of the shield bash is 1D4, and should the shield fighter make a successful test against *[Strong←Strong]* the target is also knocked to the ground.
Master	**Reaction.** The damage of the shield bash is increased from 1D4 to 1D8 and the target is knocked to the ground if the character succeeds with a *[Strong←Strong]* test.

SIXTH SENSE

When moving through dark forests and underground tunnels, one's eyes are no longer very useful. Lighting a lantern or torch may summon dangers, so the explorer had better learn to rely on his or her other senses. With dedicated training it is possible to awaken these other senses and sharpen them to the brink of eeriness. The *Sixth Sense* ability provides the character with unique capabilities when fighting at a distance or in situations where eyesight can no longer be trusted.

A character with *Sixth Sense* may under calm circumstances navigate unhindered in dim light, as well as maintain a sense of direction in complete darkness, though at a pace of only a quarter of its normal, daytime speed.

Novice **Passive.** The character has a strong intuition, which lets him or her use *Vigilant* instead of *Accurate* when attacking with ranged weapons.

Adept **Passive.** The character's intuition has expanded and the character may now use *Vigilant* instead of *Quick* for Initiative and when calculating his or her *Defense*.

Master **Passive.** The character can move and fight unhindered when blinded or in complete darkness.

SORCERY

The character is one of those who are arrogant or desperate enough to cling to the darkness. While other mystical traditions do everything they can to avoid the soul-eroding powers of Corruption, the sorcerer chooses to do the opposite.

The powers and rituals of *Sorcery* rely on the force of corruption and the possibilities offered by the taint. The sorcerer must always balance between grasping the black power that is just within its reach and remaining independent of the darkness. Most sorcerers realize that their chosen path only holds one possible end, and the most depraved among them have already come to terms with this, seeing their final and inevitable enslavement as some sort of salvation.

Novice **Special.** The sorcerer has taken its first faltering steps down the slippery slope of darkness and has found a way to not lose its foothold entirely. The sorcerer can reduce the Corruption he or she suffers from. By making a successful roll against *Resolute* each time the sorcerer suffers Corruption, he or she only receives one (1) point of Corruption.

Adept **Reaction.** The sorcerer can draw from its own Corruption to successfully use mystical powers. A sorcerer who fails in an attempt to use a power may try again, this time rolling against his or her Total Corruption value. Should this test be successful, then the power is activated as normal, but the sorcerer also suffers an additional 1D4 temporary Corruption.

Master **Special.** The sorcerer can use the Corruption of others in order to enforce its will. Each time the sorcerer attempts to affect the *Resolute* attribute of another creature, he or she may choose to roll against the creature's Shadow instead (the creatures *Resolute* –Total Corruption). Thoroughly corrupted creatures are strangely immune to this; it is as if they feed off the darkness of the world to carry on with their dark calling.

STEADFAST

Mental disciplines and stratagems for resisting improper influences have been developed among the ranks of the Templars and Black Cloaks. Also among Mystics there are individuals who study the art of resistance.

The character has a mind as hard as steel, inspiring it to fight on even against insurmountable odds. Mystics rarely succeed when trying to hurt or seize control of the character's senses, and sometimes a truly steadfast character manages to defend itself mentally and even turn the magic back on the hostile mystic.

Novice **Reaction.** The character can make a second attempt to succeed with a *Strong* or *Resolute* test when trying to break an ongoing physical effect from, for instance, traps or alchemical elixirs. This includes energies from mystical powers, as long as these are manifested physically in the forms of fire, acid or similar.

Adept **Reaction.** The character is unshakable, and can make a second attempt to shrug off ongoing powers that affects either its will or its senses.

Master **Reaction.** The psyche of the character strikes back against anyone who tries to affect it. Whenever the character is the victim of a mental attack (in other words, those attacks that are modified by *Resolute*) that fails, the attacker suffers 1D6 damage that ignores Armor.

STEEL THROW

There are traditions and groups whose representatives have practiced the art of the thrown weapon for generations. Throwing knives are for instance common among thieves and thugs in the cities, and in the woods many clan warriors are equipped with throwing axes or spears. In fact, most barbarian fighters (especially those within the clan of Zarek) regularly use throwing weapons as part of their combat tactics, unleashing a shower of steel just before they charge into the fray.

Novice **Passive.** The character has begun to understand the riddle of steel-throwing. The damage dealt by throwing weapons is increased to 1D8.

Adept **Active.** The character can perform a double throw with one Action. The attacks are rolled separately and are either aimed at the same target, or at two different ones. The character can also use melee weapons

as throwing weapons, but can only throw one such weapon per Action. The damage for this kind of attack is the base damage of the melee weapon, including any passive abilities that the thrower might have.

Master **Active.** The character can unleash a devastating triple throw and send three throwing weapons towards his or her enemies, all of them against a single target or distributed among multiple ones.

STRANGLER

The character has been initiated into the dirty, but sometimes necessary, art of strangulation. This fighting technique has a bad reputation among Ambrians and barbarians alike, but that does not mean that it is not widely desired by those who want enemies or their guards discreetly taken care of.

With this ability the character can do a lot of damage to an unprepared or slow enemy with either a garrote or, if more advanced, with the alchemical Choking Spores.

Novice **Active.** The novice *Strangler* may attack when at an Advantage. A successful attack deals 1D6 damage each turn and ignores Armor. The target cannot act until the Strangler's hold is aborted; the character maintains the stranglehold with a successful *[Cunning←Cunning]*.

Adept **Active.** The character knows how to use the deadly Choking Spores, gathered deep within Davokar by alchemists. With a successful *[Cunning←Quick]*, the spores are thrown at an enemy and deal 1D4 damage per turn for 1D4 turns, ignoring Armor. There is no known countermeasure against the effect of the Choking Spores, other than healing the victim when the damage appears. Affected victims may act as usual, in contrast to the novice level of this ability.

Master **Active.** The character can use the delicate and lethal Spore Bombs created from Choking Spores by master alchemists. If thrown over a distance, it requires a successful *Cunning* test for the bomb to land on the intended spot. The Spore Bomb fills a corridor, a smaller area or an ordinary room with a suffocating cloud. Anyone who stands within that area, enemies as well as allies, are affected by the Choking Spores, which ignore Armor and deal 1D4 damage per turn for a duration of 1D4 turns.

TACTICIAN

According to Ambrians, scholarly knowledge is counted as one of the highest virtues. Hence, it is hardly surprising that Ambrian scholars have studied skirmishes meticulously to see if the tactics of battles can work on a lesser scale, among smaller groups and even in duels. The result is a style of combat governed by strict principles and calculations, which over time can out-maneuver even the most aggressive attacker. The character is trained in this scholarly warrior tradition.

A schooled tactician may also use this ability to analyze a tactical approach and find both its strengths and weaknesses. This can be done for offensive purposes when facing a hostile group or defensively, to establish a strong defense.

Novice **Passive.** The character has studied the tactics of warfare and grasped its fundamental principles. The character may use *Cunning* instead of *Quick* when calculating its Initiative.

Adept **Passive.** The character has mastered the art of a good defensive posture, which allows him or her to use *Cunning* instead of *Quick* when calculating *Defense*.

Master **Passive.** The character is a genius when it comes to offensive warfare, which allows the character to use *Cunning* instead of *Accurate* when attacking with anything but heavy weapons.

THEURGY

Theurgy is the mystical tradition championed by the chosen priest mages of the Church of Prios. *Theurgy* is the doctrine of the inner flame, where the ember of the soul is seen as a reflection of the divine and life-giving light of the sun.

Novice **Special.** The theurg no longer suffers permanent Corruption when learning powers at novice level belonging to the tradition of *Theurgy*, nor when learning its rituals. Despite this, the character still has no protection against the temporary Corruption that comes from using the powers and rituals of *Theurgy*.

Adept **Special.** The theurg no longer suffers permanent Corruption when learning powers at adept level belonging to the tradition of *Theurgy*. The adept theurg has also learned to rest the powers and rituals of *Theurgy* on a foundation of faith so that the theurg now only suffers one (1) temporary Corruption when casting them.

Master **Special.** The theurg has reached a higher understanding of the essence of its powers, and therefore gains +1D4 in effect when using healing and holy powers, including when these damage abominations and the undead. Adding to this, the theurg suffers no permanent Corruption when learning powers at master level belonging to the tradition of *Theurgy*.

TWIN ATTACK

Barbarians, Ambrians and goblins all have fighting techniques involving the use of more than one weapon. The character has learned how to fight with two weapons, an advanced but effective technique that gives the warrior an offensive advantage. *Twin Attack* is especially effective against lightly armored targets.

Novice **Active.** The character can safely wield two weapons, one in each hand. The novice can fight with a single-handed weapon in its primary hand and a Short weapon in the other. The character can make two attacks against the same target, dealing 1D8 and 1D6 damage respectively. The enemy must defend itself separately against the attacks. The novice also receives a +1 bonus to its *Defense* as a Passive ability, but only when wielding a weapon in each hand.

Adept **Active.** The adept can use two single-handed weapons, each attack dealing 1D8 damage.

Master **Active.** With the skill of a Master, the damage dealt by the main-hand weapon is 1D10 while the weapon in the other hand deals 1D8.

TWO-HANDED FORCE

The knights of Ambria as well as the Wrathguards of Karvosti dress themselves in steel from head to toe and have realized that with that much armor, they are free to focus on dealing massive amounts of damage.

Heavy two-handed weapons rest comfortably in the character's callused hands and can have an astoundingly destructive effect on all sorts of targets. Heavy weapons are extra effective against heavily armored enemies.

Novice **Passive.** The damage dealt by heavy weapons is increased to 1D12.

Adept **Reaction.** The character has mastered the use of its weapon, so when an attack misses a target the character may instead use the returning swing in an attempt to hit the

target again. The character makes a new attack roll, which deals 1D8 damage if it hits.

Master **Active.** A heavy weapon in the hands of a master is truly a tool of armor-crushing destruction. When the attacks of a master hit the target, they completely ignore the target's Armor.

WITCHCRAFT

From the deep soils and wild spirits of Davokar comes the tradition of witchcraft. For generations, its teachings have been passed on to witches who, alongside the chieftains, have led the people of the forests through mishaps and triumphs alike. Surely, it is the primal powers of witchcraft that enables the barbarian clans to live within Davokar.

Novice **Special.** The witch has learned the teachings of witchcraft and how to withstand its darker elements. The witch no longer suffers any permanent Corruption from learning powers at novice level belonging to the *Witchcraft* tradition, nor when learning any of its rituals. Despite this, the character still suffers the temporary Corruption that follows when using the powers and rituals of *Witchcraft*.

Adept **Special.** The witch suffers no Corruption from learning the powers of *Witchcraft* at adept level. The adept witch has also learned to bind the powers and rituals of the craft in earth, blood and spirit so that they only give one (1) temporary Corruption when used.

Master **Special.** The witch suffers no Corruption from learning the powers of *Witchcraft* at the master level.

WITCHSIGHT

By way of the shadows surrounding creatures, locations and objects the world's deeper conflicts are observable for a character with the *Witchsight* ability. Opening up one's mind in order to examine the world of shadows can provide invaluable insights, but it also entails great risk: the more open the mind is and the deeper the insights are, the greater the risk of becoming tainted by the darkness of the world. It is for this reason that masters of this ability seldom use it to their full capacity.

As previously stated, the color of the Shadows can give the character clues regarding the spiritual alliance of the inspected creature (see Shadow & Corruption, page 174). The Game Master manages the nuances and powers of the Shadows and describes what the character sees with its *Witchsight*.

Novice **Free.** As a Free Action, the character can make a roll against *[Vigilant←Discreet]* in an attempt to see the dominant Shadow of a creature, location or object. Each such attempt forces the character to suffer 1 temporary Corruption.

Adept **Free.** The character has gained the greater insight of an adept regarding auras and mystical phenomenon. *Witchsight* now reveals all Shadows of an inspected target but not their respective strengths. The character suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption each time he or she attempts to see the Shadows of a creature, location or object.

Master **Free.** The character has achieved the master's superior insights and can now see all Shadows and their respective strengths clearly. The character suffers 1D6 temporary Corruption each time an attempt is made to see the Shadows of a creature, location or object.

WIZARDRY

Wizardry is taught by Ordo Magica and is a tradition whose practitioners are well-versed in the mysteries of fire, the will's triumph over matter and the labyrinths of the senses. To wizards of the Order, these phenomena are intimately connected.

Novice **Special.** The wizard no longer suffers permanent Corruption when learning powers at novice level belonging to the tradition of *Wizardry*, nor when learning its rituals. Despite this, the character has no protection against the temporary Corruption that comes from using the powers and rituals of *Wizardry*.

Adept **Special.** The wizard no longer suffers Corruption from learning the adept level of the powers belonging to the tradition of *Wizardry*. The adept has also learned to ground the powers and rituals of *Wizardry* in theories so well that the character now only suffers one (1) temporary Corruption when casting them.

Master **Special.** The master wizard's understanding of linked magic is all but complete and the player character may therefore re-roll one (1) failed test each turn when attempting to establish a Chain of mystical effects (see page 130). The wizard no longer suffers permanent Corruption from learning the master level of the powers belonging to the tradition of *Wizardry*.

Mystical Traditions

IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED that the world does not only consist of matter, and it is obvious to everyone that there are individuals who can manipulate the flows of both material and non-material energies. The use of mystical powers is in no way commonplace, not in Ambria, nor among the barbarians. But it is common enough for many cultures to have formed traditions around it.

THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS answer questions regarding how these powers are to be understood, how they may be taught as well as in what ways they are meant to be used. They have also worked out ways to avoid or at least lessen the dark side-effects of casting mystical powers and rituals. The powers not only manipulate but also violate the fabric of the world, something which makes the world strike back – in the form of Corruption. That effect can be reduced with the help of the traditions.

Player characters need not belong to or practice any of the traditions to be able to use mystical powers. Mystics without connections to a tradition are often called Untamed and are considered dangerous by their traditionally trained colleagues. Schooled mystics sometimes perceive the independent ones as no better than sorcerers, but mostly regard them as their less fortunate and less successful cousins.

Theurgy

THEURGY IS NOWADAYS understood as the teachings of the mystical force that radiates from the sun and which burns at the heart of the human spirit. Its powers are only found among the most loyal worshipers of the light: the chosen champions of Prios. The theurgs are considered the emissaries of Prios in the world of the living, and their burden is truly a great one. They lead the faithful in prayer, thereby guiding the sun through the darkness of the underworld each night. And their passion keeps the heavenly light from fading; without their strenuous work the ailing Sun God would surely die and the world would plunge into The Eternal Night.

Theurgy is an ancient tradition, first developed by the priesthoods devoted to the Old Gods. It is disputed among scholars and the learned whether witchcraft

is older than theurgy or if it is the other way around. Either way, the golden age of theurgy is now. Ever since Prios earned himself the devotion and faith of most Ambrians, the bearers of the tradition have thrived. It is not important to them which of the traditions came first and which is the oldest. As far as the theurgs are concerned, the worshiping of moss and veneration of trees are unworthy of mankind's holy spirit, and most consider witchcraft to be a path that leads only to decay and sorcery. They regard wizardry – the mystical order built on the foundation of older theurgy – in much the same way, as a truly godless and morally questionable practice.

THE TITLES OF THEURGY

The titles within the tradition of theurgy are intertwined with the Church of Prios, since theurgs are the defenders of the Church, chosen by Sun God himself. Obedience to one's elders is both highly regarded and enforced, and the punishments for disobedience are severe. Lowest in rank are the initiates, who assist and are tutored by the Church's Brothers and Sisters, who in turn serve under the elder theurgs, called Fathers or Mothers. Within the organization of the Sun Church there are also priests who have not been granted the God-given powers of the theurgs, and they are called liturgs.

POWERS

The blessings and curses of theurgy include *Anathema*, *Blessed Shield*, *Holy Aura*, *Inherit Wound*, *Lay on Hands*, *Levitate*, *Prios' Burning Glass*, *True Form*, *Unnoticeable* and *Witch Hammer*.

RITUALS

The rituals of theurgy, often performed as religious ceremonies, are *Command Confession*, *Exorcism*, *Heretic´s Trail*, *Holy Smoke*, *Judging Bonds*, *Oracle*, *Patron Saint*, *Purging Fire* and *Sanctifying Rite*.

CORRUPTION

The theurgs of Prios teach that Corruption occurs when nature is allowed to grow without being cultivated and tamed. The Corruption thrives in the wild, in chaos, that which is uncontrolled by humans – and in their encounters with Davokar they seem to find all the evidence needed to support this interpretation of the world order.

Every devotee of Prios must accept the threat of Corruption and keep their inner flame burning despite the risk of taint; just as the Lightbringer Ofelya Attio is said to have proclaimed while standing at the threshold of the Dark Lords' stronghold: "Fire shall with fire be fought, darkness shall with darkness be vanquished!"

Sorcery

THE LEGENDS ARE teeming with sorcerers: mystics who draw their power from musty wellsprings or gain their corrupt gifts from creatures of evil. It is harder to find them in the real world, but those who know how to read the Shadows can sense their presence or see traces of their tainted work. Korinthia's people faced the undead servants of the Dark Lords during The Great War, and while the Dark Lords perished, their parasitic powers continued to drain the life out of Alberetor, forcing the Ambrians to flee north. There they instead faced the blighted creatures of Davokar, born from another kind of evil that festers in the fallen ruins of Symbaroum.

Sorcery is the mystical tradition that comprises powers and rituals fueled by Corruption and taint, whose usage provides power in the short run, but corrodes the mystic's body and soul in the long run. Theurgs active among the Twilight Friars gather rituals of sorcery as well as blight-stricken artifacts in an attempt to understand this new, dark enemy. Within their monastery in the Titans, it is said that the Black Cloaks hide dark vaults oozing with corruptive energies and echoing with the lamentations of the poor, tainted souls kept there for study.

POWERS

The incantations of *Sorcery* include *Bend Will*, *Curse*, *Larvae Boil*, *Revenant Strike* and *Unholy Aura*.

RITUALS

The sacrificial practices of the dark arts include such rituals as *Desecrating Rite*, *Enslave*, *Exchange Shadow* and *Possess*.

CORRUPTION

In the view of the sorcerer the world is dying or already dead, and Corruption is but one of many symptoms of its irredeemable state. To fight Corruption is like pretending that death does not exist. Better to know it, and learn how to understand and use it as much as possible before everything meets its fated end.

To walk side by side with darkness is a precarious act of balance, to say the least. Not to give in to darkness is the key, for doing so would surely mean being completely devoured. Wise sorcerers accept Corruption, and exploit it, while still keeping a distance from its cold embrace, for as long as they possibly can.

Witchcraft

THE WITCHES' WORLD is composed of winds, blood and all things growing, together forming the three hazardous paths a witch has to wander: the white path where the wind wails and spirits howl; the red path of the slow-running blood; and the green path, overgrown by thickets and roots. According to the mythology of the witches, there are places where these three paths converge, such as the cliff of Karvosti deep within Davokar.

Witchcraft is believed to be the oldest and most deeply rooted of the traditions. Some tutors at Ordo Magica even claim that witchcraft – despite its primitive flaws – forms the basis of theurgy, and because of this, both theurgs and wizards have the wise witches of old to thank for understanding the fundamental principles of magic.

THE TITLES OF WITCHCRAFT

Witches believe in independence, thus they are watchful of titles and hierarchal structures. The harsh living conditions of Davokar have resulted in each barbarian village housing a witch, and every witch is expected to have a helper (an apprentice). Furthermore, within each clan there is a witches' node supervised by a Keeper, often called a Hex Mistress by southern scholars. All nodes convene at Karvosti, where the High Chieftain is advised by the Huldra, the foremost of all witches, whom outsiders generally call the Arch Witch.

POWERS

The chants of the witches include *Bend Will*, *Curse*, *Entangling Vines*, *Inherit Wound*, *Larvae Boil*, *Lay on Hands*, *Maltransformation*, *Nature's Embrace*, *Shapeshifting* and *Storm Arrow*.

RITUALS

The rituals of witchcraft are often performed as dances and include *Blood Bond*, *Borrow Beast*, *Familiar*, *Nature's Lullaby*, *Necromancy*, *Oracle*, *Quick Growth*, *Turn Weather* and *Witch Circle*.

CORRUPTION

For practitioners of witchcraft Corruption is viewed as nature's way of seeking balance; what the witch does to the world strikes back against him or her. The Corruption must be weighed against the necessity of what the witch is about to do and be handled accordingly. Some witches will choose to sacrifice themselves to the Corruption in order to save their people; such is the fate of a witch according to the demands of life in the gloom of Davokar.

Wizardry

THE POWERS OF WIZARDRY come from disciplined studies into the fundamental laws of nature, and from insights regarding how these laws can be used and controlled by sheer will and reason. It is a strenuous education, even without the boring everyday tasks that the novices must perform for their masters. Only half of those who begin their studies with Ordo Magica see them through, but those who prevail are rewarded with a deep understanding of the mysteries of wizardry.

Wizardry grew out of early forms of theurgy, in a time when the people of Alberetor still worshipped a pantheon of gods. Philosophers and scholars started to renounce the metaphysical ideas of the priesthood, instead regarding the laws of nature as independent from the machinations of deities. To the founders of Wizardry, the Old Gods were seen as the creators of the world, but not its shepherds. Instead the world is regarded as being profoundly magical and not in need of any Gods to function. Nor is the world meant to be worshiped, merely understood – and used.

THE TITLES OF ORDO MAGICA

The titles of Wizardry are closely linked to the competence and function, as well as the status, of the individual. The list of a novice's duties is a long one, and the commitments of the adept wizard are considerable, though their new title comes with a touch of authority and privilege. An adept who is experienced enough to teach carries the title Magistrate.

The Masters often have a specific area of expertise, and the few obligations they have can usually be delegated to a novice or adept under their rule. Each order chapter (commonly called "Wizards' guild") is governed by a Chapter Master, who represents Ordo Magica when dealing with local authorities. Ordo Magica as a whole is headed by the Grand Master, stationed at the chapter in Agrella.

The title of Arch Mage is no longer in use. Before The Great War the Grand Master of the organization was chosen from within the circle of Arch Mages. But since all Arch Mages perished in the war, the Grand Master is instead chosen by, and often from among, the acting Chapter Masters.

POWERS

The spells of wizardry include *Anathema*, *Bend Will*, *Brimstone Cascade*, *Confusion*, *Flame Wall*, *Illusionary Correction*, *Levitate*, *Mind Throw*, *True Form* and *Unnoticeable*.

RITUALS

The catalogue of wizards' rituals covers *Clairvoyance*, *False Terrain*, *Flaming Servant*, *Illusion*, *Magic Circle*, *Sanctum*, *Seven-league Stride*, *Soul Stone*, *Tale of Ashes* and *Telepathic Interrogation*.

CORRUPTION

According to Ordo Magica, Corruption is largely misunderstood, thanks to the sermons of hot-headed theurgs and the fairy tales of witches. It all comes down to a regulated response; a reaction that appears when a mystic uses his or her power to affect nature. This is not that different from what happens when someone jumps off the stern of a boat, simultaneously pushing the boat forward with the same amount of force that goes into the jump. If the jumper is reckless, he will drop into the water; if the jumper is careful, he will land on the dock with dry shoes.

Independent Mystics

PARTICULARLY GIFTED INDIVIDUALS have always been able to bend and break seemingly inescapable laws of nature, and many scholars claim that it was through coalitions of such independent, or untamed, mystics that the traditions first arose. Whether this is true or not, there occasionally are individuals who either choose or are forced to study on their own, or in smaller groups.

Independent Mystics are not burdened with the theories of the traditions, which give them more freedom in their choice of powers. However, they are also much more vulnerable to Corruption. Many untamed mystics tend to evolve their own understanding of the world and come to espouse theories that contradict those of the established traditions.

POWERS

The player may pick any mystical power for his or her independent mystic.

RITUALS

Independent mystics rarely learn rituals, but when they do the chosen rituals tend to be highly personal, without regard for traditional restrictions.

CORRUPTION

The gift of freedom is double-edged and darkness is drawn to the gifted as envy to those with talent. The power of Corruption cuts deep and must be kept under control; many a free mystic has accepted the darkness although it truly is a kiss of death.

The Myth of Pure Magic

Within all traditions there is a myth of the Pure Magic, the undefiled miracle. In different versions it tells about a time when the world was unspoiled and when the use of mystical powers yielded no Corruption. Then something happened. Evil entered the world and with it came the blight. Some mystics dream about recreating the pure magic of yore by healing the wounds of the world, by expelling evil, by slaying the World Serpent or reclaiming the long lost arch magic. However, most Mystics accept Corruption as a part of their trade and just something to be dealt with.

Mystical Powers

MYSTICAL POWERS are a manifestation of mystic energies that have been manipulated and guided by a trained or talented will. For some, these powers come naturally, as a gift of birth, but in most cases the powers are developed through many hard years of working together with a patient master, there to guide and make corrections. Whether the powers are a result of a gift, studies or dedication, they tend to define their users as much as being a tool in their hands.

THE FOLLOWING TERMS and rules are important when using powers in the world of *Symbaroum*.

Ongoing Effect: The effect of the power is active until the character fails a specific test, detailed in the description of the power. This test is repeated every turn on the character's Initiative. Keeping an ongoing effect running counts as a Free Action.

Ongoing Effect on Group: The power affects each target until the character fails a specific test, detailed in the description of the power. This test is made for each target and repeated every turn on the character's Initiative. Keeping an ongoing effect running counts as a Free Action.

Chain: The power may potentially hit more than one target, but a test has to be made for each target, one at a time, in an order decided by the player. The Chain continues until the player fails a test.

Concentration: If a mystic suffers damage while using a power with a potentially ongoing effect, he or she must make a successful roll against *[Resolute –Damage]* in order to stay focused. A test is made for every attack that hits the mystic and for every power that is ongoing at the moment. If the mystic fails any of these tests, then the ongoing effects of all powers are ended. In this case damage refers to the damage that the mystic suffers after the Armor value has been subtracted.

Corruption: Permanent Corruption is the corruption that eats away at one's soul and cannot be washed away with anything but purging rituals. Temporary Corruption diminishes over time and disappears completely at the end of a scene. A character's Total Corruption is the sum of both its temporary and permanent Corruption. The Total Corruption is used to estimate just how affected the character is by the Corruption.

Material: The description of powers sometimes lists either materials or an object. This is mainly intended to add flavor to the power, rather than being a strict requirement. If a player would rather have his character use another material instead of the suggested one, then he or she is of course allowed to make a change. An exception to this is powers that operate through the use of a weapon, in which case the weapon has to be available for the power to function. Holy/unholy symbols may be a sun symbol, an evil mark, a witch's medallion or a wizard's staff, for example.

ANATHEMA

Material: A small silver bell.

The mystic has studied the secrets of countering magic and can dispel the effects of other powers. *Anathema* does not affect rituals – their mystical bonds are too thoroughly woven and can only be dispelled by other rituals.

Novice	**Active.** By making a successful roll against *[Resolute←Resolute]* the mystic can disperse a power's ongoing effects on a creature, or on himself provided that the mystic is fit to wield magic. The *Resolute* of the mystic who has unleashed the power is used as resistance when making the test.
Adept	**Active.** The mystic can disperse ongoing effects on a Chain of creatures; tests are made for one target at a time, until one test fails.
Master	**Active.** By making a successful *Resolute* test the mystic is now powerful enough to dispel all currently ongoing mystical effects, including summoned effects and creatures.

BEND WILL

Material: A silver ring.

Free will is an illusion, but the power of the will is unmistakable. The mystic has come to understand these seemingly contradictory principles and can use the insight to control the will of other creatures.

Novice	**Active.** The mystic can seize control of a creature's will by making a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The control is considered active until the mystic breaks concentration or fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The controlled creature can only perform one (1) Action each turn and cannot use any active abilities or powers while affected.
Adept	**Active.** The mystic can seize control of a creature's will by making a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The mystic does not have to concentrate to sustain the control; it is ongoing and considered active until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. A controlled creature can only perform one (1) Action each turn and cannot use any active abilities or powers while affected.
Master	**Active.** The mystic can seize control of a creature's will by making a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The mystic does not have to concentrate to sustain the control; it is ongoing and considered active until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The controlled creature can be forced to perform its two usual Actions each turn.

BLESSED SHIELD

Material: A holy symbol.

By faith and will, the mystic raises a holy shield against the weapons of its enemies. The shield is invisible until attacked, at which time it glitters as if struck by sunlight.

Novice	**Active.** With a successful roll against *Resolute* the mystic surrounds itself with a warm glow. This glow provides an additional 1D4 Armor. Also, any abomination or undead who attacks the mystic with melee attacks suffers 1D4 damage from the glow, ignoring Armor. The blessed shield lasts until the end of the scene.
Adept	**Active.** As at the novice level, but the extra Armor and the damage dealt is rolled with 1D6. Also, an ally within sight can be included in the effect of the blessed shield.
Master	**Active.** As at the novice level, but the extra Armor and the damage dealt is rolled with 1D8. Two of the mystic's allies can be included in the effect of the blessed shield.

BRIMSTONE CASCADE

Material: A fistful of pure brimstone.

The mystic can unleash the rampaging spirit of fire and burn its enemies to cinders, or at least scorch them severely.

Novice	**Active.** The mystic lashes out with fire and brimstone against a target. If the mystic succeeds with a *[Resolute←Quick]* test, the cascade deals 1D12 points of damage. If the mystic fails the test the cascade deals only 1D6 damage.
Adept	**Active.** The mystic unleashes a Chain of burning energy. If the mystic succeeds with a *[Resolute←Quick]* test, the cascade deals 1D12 points of damage. If the mystic fails the test the cascade deals only 1D6 damage. If the target suffers the full 1D12 damage, the mystic may try to steer the flaming energy towards an additional target, and so on until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Quick]* test.
Master	**Active.** The mystic unleashes a veritable storm of flaming and smoking energies. If the mystic passes a *[Resolute←Quick]* test, the cascade deals 1D12 points of damage. If the mystic fail the test the cascade only deals 1D6 damage. Even if the mystic should fail a test the Chain does not stop; it continues to strike new oppenents until a second test is failed.

CONFUSION

Material: A couple of drops of wine.

The mystic's understanding of the labyrinth of the senses can cause an enemy to lose itself inside its own mind. Confused enemies become paralyzed or lose their ability to separate friend from foe.

Novice **Active.** The mystic can confuse an enemy with a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, making the enemy unaware of its actions. Roll 1D6 each turn until the mystic breaks concentration or fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test:
1–2, the target stands still, blinking stupidly;
3–4, the target attacks whichever of its allies is closest;
5–6, the target attacks whichever of its enemies is closest.
If there is any uncertainty regarding who is closest to the target, roll a die to decide.

Adept **Active.** The mystic can confuse an enemy without having to concentrate. The *Confusion* is ongoing until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. A new test must be made each turn.

Master **Active.** The mystic creates a Chain of Confusion. If the mystic manages to confuse a target with a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, then it may continue with another target and so on, until the mystic fails a test. *Resolute* is then tested each turn for each target to decide which of them remain confused.

CURSE

Material: None, a dark glare is enough.

The mystic masters the stare of the Evil Eye and can curse enemies on the battlefield; a power often used by the disciples of the Dark Lords during The Great War.

Novice **Free.** Once per turn, the mystic's dark glare automatically gives an enemy a second chance to fail all success tests meant to affect the mystic (roll twice, the action fails if one of the tests is a failure). This effect is ongoing until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test.

Adept **Free.** Like novice, but the enemy has a second chance to fail all its success tests regardless of target. The effect is ongoing until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test.

Master **Active.** The mystic puts a curse of death upon an enemy. The enemy suffers 1D6 damage, ignoring Armor, for all actions it tries to perform. The target suffers no damage if it remains still and passive. This effect is active until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test.

Table 7: Mystical Powers

POWER	TRADITION
Anathema	Wizardry, Theurgy
Bend Will	Wizardry, Sorcery, Witchcraft
Blessed Shield	Theurgy
Brimstone Cascade	Wizardry
Confusion	Wizardry
Curse	Sorcery, Witchcraft
Entangling Vines	Witchcraft
Flame Wall	Wizardry
Holy Aura	Theurgy
Illusory Correction	Wizardry
Inherit Wound	Theurgy, Witchcraft
Larvae Boils	Sorcery, Witchcraft
Lay on Hands	Theurgy, Witchcraft
Levitate	Wizardry, Theurgy
Maltransformation	Witchcraft
Mind-Throw	Wizardry
Nature's Embrace	Witchcraft
Prios' Burning Glass	Theurgy
Revenant Strike	Sorcery
Shapeshift	Witchcraft
Storm Arrow	Witchcraft
True Form	Wizardry, Theurgy
Unholy Aura	Sorcery
Unnoticeable	Wizardry, Theurgy
Witch Hammer	Theurgy

ENTANGLING VINES

Material: A handful of seeds or a tangle of roots.

The earth is bound by roots, while objects above ground are often covered by vines. All that the mystic does is uses its will to stimulate the already ongoing processes of nature.

Novice **Active.** By rolling a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic calls forth entangling vines or roots from out of the earth and can ensnare an enemy. The ensnared creature cannot move but can use ranged weapons and powers. The creature is ensnared until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test, starting the following turn.

Adept **Active.** The mystic can ensnare a Chain of creatures. If the mystic manages to ensnare a target with a successful *Resolute* test, then he or she can attempt to snare another

one, and so on until an attempt fails. Starting the following turn, a *[Resolute←Strong]* test is made for each target to determine how many of them remain ensnared.

Master **Active.** The mystic creates an entangling Chain of thorns. Those ensnared with a *[Resolute←Strong]* test also suffers 1D6 damage per turn from their thorny prison. The sharp thorns find gaps in the targets armor, so any Armor is ignored.

FLAME WALL

Material: A fistful of brimstone, with some mercury.

The mystic has gained insights into the mysteries of fire and can summon fire to form it into a wall or a dome.

Novice **Active.** By making a successful *Resolute* test the mystic calls forth a wall of whirling flames just in front of it (melee combat distance). The wall is wide enough to cover most corridors and divide most rooms. When in larger rooms and when outside, one can get around the wall of flames by using two Movement Actions, but it can also be flown over with only one Movement Action. It is possible to pass through the wall with an ordinary Movement Action, but all who do suffer 1D12 points of fire damage. Smaller flammable objects such as arrows and bolts are burned to cinder if shot through the burning wall. The wall can also be summoned directly on a group of enemies who are then automatically wounded, provided that the targets form a line in front of the mystic. The *Flame Wall* is sustained until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test, made once each turn after the first.

Adept **Active.** The *Flame Wall* curves and closes into a burning circle around the mystic and its allies, as well as any enemy combatants within range of melee combat when this power is activated. The wall of flames can either be flown over or passed through, both with a Movement Action, but all who pass through the wall suffer 1D12 points of fire damage. The *Flame Wall* is sustained until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test, made once each turn after the first.

Master **Active.** The *Flame Wall* curves and bends until it forms a burning dome that covers the mystic and its allies, as well as any enemy combatants within range of melee combat when this power is activated. It is possible to pass through the burning wall with a Movement Action, but all who do so suffer 1D12 points of fire damage. The wall of fire is sustained until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test, made once each turn after the first.

HOLY AURA

Material: Holy symbol.

The mystic can send out a holy and life-affirming aura that harms abominations and the undead. At higher levels, this aura can also provide healing powers for living creatures.

Novice **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test the mystic envelops itself in an aura of holy energies that is harmful to abominations and undead. The target suffers 1D6 points of damage, ignoring Armor. This power affects all abominations and undead within sight of the mystic and is ongoing until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test or breaks concentration. The mystic can exclude allied abominations or undead from the effect of the *Holy Aura*.

Adept **Active.** The aura now deals 1D8 damage to abominations and undead, while living creatures heal 1D4 points of *Toughness* each turn.

Master **Active.** Same effect as at adept level, but the effect against abominations and undead is increased to 1D10. Living allies now heal 1D6 points of *Toughness* each turn.

ILLUSORY CORRECTION

Material: A shard of a mirror.

There is a gap between the world and the perception of it. The mystic can use this gap to evade a potentially horrible fate or to make alterations to the flow and perception of reality.

Novice **Reaction.** The mystic can make a *Resolute* test once per turn to make a correction of reality – if successful the mystic may re-roll a failed *Defense* test.

Adept **Reaction.** Once per turn, the mystic can make a *Resolute* test in order to correct something that happened to him or her. This means that any test that somehow affected the mystic can be re-rolled.

Master **Reaction.** Once per turn, the mystic can make a *Resolute* test in order to correct reality for someone else. This means that any one test that affected the intended target in any way may be re-rolled.

INHERIT WOUND

Material: A splash of blood.

The mystic has closely studied the spirits of creation and death, and can use this knowledge to redistribute damage between itself, its allies and its enemies.

Novice	**Free.** By making a successful die roll against *Resolute* the mystic can attract the spirits of damage from another creature. The target heals 1D6 points of *Toughness* while the mystic suffers an equal amount of damage.
Adept	**Free.** As novice, but the effect heals 1D8 points of *Toughness* and also draws any ongoing effects of poison and bleeding to the mystic. The mystic suffers half the damage (rounded up), both from wounds and any poison/bleeding.
Master	**Active.** The target heals 1D8 points of *Toughness* while the mystic suffers half as much damage. The mystic may also pass the other half of the damage on to another creature in sight. The chosen target's armor is ignored and it cannot defend itself in any way.

LARVAE BOIL

Material: A handful of larvae.

Drawing from the force of wrath the mystic can infuse an enemy's body with larvae that then start to eat their way out. Although it is loudly refuted by members of the court, persistent rumors say that this is how the hero king Ynedar met his demise.

Novice	**Active.** The mystic plants larvae inside the body of its enemy, which then start to eat their way out. The poor target suffers 1D4 damage each turn, ignoring Armor. The effect is automatic the first turn and continues until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test.
Adept	**Active.** The larval growth inside the body deals 1D6 damage each turn, ignoring Armor. The effect continues until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test.
Master	**Active.** The larvae swarm inside the target's body and deal 1D8 damage each turn, ignoring Armor. The effect continues until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test.

LAY ON HANDS

Material: A holy symbol.

The secrets of life lay bare for the mystic and with them follows the coveted power of healing, often interpreted as a gift from whichever deity the mystic adheres to.

Novice **Active.** The mystic can through touch, and by passing a *Resolute* test, heal 1D6 points of a target's *Toughness*. This power also works on the mystic itself.

Adept **Active.** The mystic's healing hands now heal 1D8 points of *Toughness* and stop the ongoing effect of poisons and bleeding.

Master **Active.** The mystic can heal a creature within sight, healing 1D8 *Toughness* and halting the ongoing effect of poisons and bleeding. The mystic now heals 1D12 points of *Toughness* when touching the target.

LEVITATE

Material: A handful of feathers.

The binding force of the world can be manipulated, and with that insight the mystic has gained the capability to levitate, using nothing but the power of the mind.

Novice **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test the mystic can soar over the battlefield, out of reach of melee weapons. The mystic can move a distance equal to one stride per turn while levitating. Ranged attacks and flying enemies remain a problem. The mystic stays floating in the air until the mystic breaks concentration or the scene ends. If concentration is broken the mystic falls to the ground and suffers 1D6 damage, ignoring any Armor the mystic might be wearing.

Adept **Active.** With a passed *[Resolute←Strong]* test the mystic can levitate an ally and let him or her soar over the battlefield out of reach of the enemies' melee weapons. The mystic can move the soaring ally a distance equal to one stride per turn while it is levitating. Ranged attacks and flying enemies remain a problem. The mystic's ally stays soaring in the air until the mystic breaks concentration or the scene ends. If concentration is broken the ally falls to the ground and suffers 1D6 damage, ignoring Armor.

Master **Active.** The mystic can make itself and a Chain of allies *[Resolute←Strong]* soar over the battlefield, out of reach of melee weapons. The mystic can move both itself and any soaring creature a distance equal to one stride per turn while levitating. Ranged attacks and flying enemies remain a problem. The mystic and its allies stay soaring in the air until the mystic breaks concentration or the scene ends. If concentration is broken, they all float down to the ground without taking any damage.

MALTRANSFORMATION

Material: A pupa or an egg.

The mystic has grasped that physical appearance is a dynamic concept, and knows how to use that insight to transform its enemies into weaker forms.

Novice **Active.** With a successful roll against *Resolute* the mystic can turn a target into a harmless beast (mammal or reptile, the mystic decides which). The target stays in that form until the mystic breaks concentration or fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. This test is made each turn on the mystic's Initiative. The harmless animal keeps the target's original Attributes but none of its abilities or powers and can neither attack nor use items.

Adept **Active.** The mystic no longer has to concentrate to keep the *Maltransformation* active; it is ongoing until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test.

Master **Active.** The mystic can trigger a Chain of Maltransformations. If the mystic succeeds in transforming one target, he or she may attempt to transform another one, and so on until a transformation attempt fails. The *Maltransformation* is ongoing until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test, made each turn for each target.

MIND-THROW

Material: A glass pearl.

The mystic can use its mind to move and throw loose objects, or even enemies.

Novice **Active/Reaction.** The mystic can actively hurl objects in the surrounding area as weapons or use them reactively, to block incoming attacks. The mystic will have to make a *[Resolute←Quick]* test to attack this way and deals 1D8 damage if successful. If an object is used as a temporary shield, make a *[Resolute←Accurate]* test to block incoming physical attacks or a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test for magic projectiles. The object is destroyed after one hit, either dealt or blocked.

Adept **Active.** The mystic is capable of using the power of his or her mind *[Resolute←Strong]* to lift, and throw, an enemy. A thrown enemy lands a Movement Action away and suffers 1D8 damage. The enemy lands on its back, unless it makes a successful *Quick* test.

Master **Active.** The mystic can throw a Chain of enemies if succeeding with a *[Resolute←Strong]* test. The mystic starts with the first target

and keeps making tests until one fails. The thrown enemies land a Movement Action away and suffer 1D8 damage. The enemies land on their back, unless they make a successful test against *Quick*.

NATURE'S EMBRACE

Material: A fistful of soil.

The deep soil of the world is a safe place for the mystic, just as the mountain rock may become a shelter. The mystic can sink into the earth and thereby avoid attacks from its enemies.

Novice **Active.** The mystic is able to sink into the earth if a successful *Resolute* test is made. There, the mystic is invulnerable but also unable to take any Actions. The mystic must succeed with another *Resolute* test each turn to remain in the safe bosom of the earth. If the mystic fails the test, then he or she is returned to the surface.

Adept **Active.** The mystic can use mystical powers on itself while in the earth and does not have to test *Resolute* in order to remain there.

Master **Active.** The mystic can move by using its Movement Action to appear in a different spot than where it first sank into the ground. The mystic can also use powers on its allies while in the earth, as well as see the allies through the protective layers of soil.

PRIOS' BURNING GLASS

Material: A holy symbol.

The mystic can focus the light of its soul into a burning ray, which damages most beings and destroys the unholy.

Novice **Active.** With a *Resolute* test the mystic steers the holy light towards a target, dealing 1D6 damage. The damage increases to 1D8 if the target is an abomination or undead.

Adept **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic can let the holy light pass over all enemies in sight. The burning energy deals 1D8 damage, 1D12 on abominations and undead.

Master **Active.** With a *Resolute* test the mystic can let his or her inner light shine over all nearby enemies, dealing 1D8 damage, increased to 1D12 if the enemies are abominations or undead. The mystic can also stun all thoroughly corrupt and undead enemies for one turn if he or she succeeds with a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test.

REVENANT STRIKE

Material: A weapon tainted by a *Desecrating Rite*.

The mystic's weapon is touched by dark energies, which increases the damage dealt against living creatures. Worse, those slain will rise again, as walking corpses controlled by the sorcerer. Undead created by revenant strikes have the same statistics as the dragoul (see page 230). The undead returns to its state of true death at the end of the scene.

Novice **Active.** The sorcerer ignites a malicious flame around its melee weapon, which then deals 1D4 additional damage till the scene ends.

Adept **Reaction.** As novice, and creatures slain by the *Revenant Strike* rise again the following turn, loyal to the sorcerer.

Master **Free.** As Adept, but the effect is activated as a free action and a hit deals +1D8 damage, instead of +1D4.

SHAPESHIFT

Material: A bit of fur or skin from the beast in question.

The mystic's understanding of the essence of nature makes it possible to take the form of beasts – a talent that the snake witches of clan Gaoia are particularly renowned for.

Novice **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic can take the form of a small beast (mammal or reptile); practical when wanting to escape or when scouting, but useless in combat. The mystic's Attributes remain unchanged but he or she may re-roll all *Discreet* and *Quick* tests (including *Defense*). Also, enemies do not get any Free Attacks against the mystic when in beast form, even if it withdraws from melee combat or hurries past an enemy. The mystic does not have to test *Resolute* to remain in beast form, but has to pass a *Resolute* test to change back. For the duration of the transformation, the mystic counts as a beast. If the mystic becomes the victim of powers that affect beasts, then it may choose to remain in beast form – and hence suffer the effect of the power – or revert back to its original form.

Adept **Active.** The mystic can assume the form of a battle beast (wild boar or wolf are most common). The beast form has the Attributes of the mystic but also gains the traits *Armored* (I) and *Natural Weapon* (I).

Master **Active.** The mystic can now assume the form of a truly imposing battle beast, gaining the traits *Regeneration* (I) and *Robust* (I) in addition to those gained at the adept level.

Many are the tasteless jokes uttered in regards to this collection of signs, recovered on a ruin at the forest edge near the town of Kastor.

STORM ARROW

Material: Arrows or crossbow bolts.

The mystic can ask the wind to lift and carry arrows towards its enemies. The barbarian witch Yagaba, a friend of Lasifor Nightpitch, sometimes demonstrates this power, and is rarely seen without a handful of black-feathered arrows floating by her side.

Novice **Active.** The mystic enchants a handful of arrows (up to five) with a successful *Resolute* test. The arrows then float next to the mystic for the rest of the scene and can be fired, once per turn, as a Free Action (one arrow can be fired the same turn that the power is activated). The arrows hit their target automatically. Any quality or special ability that the arrow might have is added to the effect. The arrow normally deals 1D6 damage.

Adept **Active.** The arrows are enchanted as above, but in the hands of the adept mystic they now deal 1D8 damage. As a Combat Action, the mystic can send two arrows against either the same target or two different targets. If the mystic performs this Action, then he or she cannot fire another arrow as a Free Action.

Master **Active.** The mystic can use a Combat Action to fire three arrows against one or separate targets. If the mystic performs this Action, then he or she cannot fire another arrow as a Free Action.

TRUE FORM

Material: A pupa.

The mystic has spent many long nights closely studying lies and false guises, and is capable of making the surrounding world reveal its true nature.

Novice **Reaction.** With a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, the mystic's clarity allows him or her to see through every illusion, transformation or any other effect within sight that hides the true form of things. Revealed illusions disappear, while transformations remain intact, although the mystic can see what is behind them.

Adept **Active.** With a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, the mystic can make a Chain of creatures return to their true form. If the first attempt succeeds the mystic can make another attempt for the next creature, and so on until a test is failed. Nothing stops the creatures from transforming again, though.

Master **Active.** As adept, but the mystic can make transformed creatures reveal their true form and then force them to maintain their original form. A *Resolute* test is required to make a target maintain its original form. The test is made on the targets' Initiative when/if they try to transform again.

UNHOLY AURA

Material: An unholy symbol.

The mystic can surround itself with an aura of unholy energies that harms living enemies but heals abominations and undead.

Novice **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test the mystic can send out an aura of unholy energies that harms both cultural beings and beasts. It deals 1D6 damage, ignoring Armor. The aura affects all cultural beings and beasts within sight of the mystic, whether they are friend or foe, and remains active until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test or breaks concentration.

Adept **Active.** As novice level, but the mystic can choose to exclude living allies from the effect of the *Unholy Aura*. The power is active until the mystic fails a *Resolute* test.

Master **Active.** As adept, but the effect is increased to 1D8 and any nearby allied abominations and undead heal 1D8 points of *Toughness* due to the spell's unholy energies.

UNNOTICEABLE

Material: A strip from a thin veil.

The mystic can remain undetected by subtly turning the enemy's attention elsewhere.

Novice **Active.** With a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, the mystic can fade from one creature's perception. The mystic remains invisible to this creature until the mystic makes an attack or takes any kind of damage.

Adept **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic can fade from the perception of all nearby enemies and remain invisible until the mystic makes an attack or takes any kind of damage.

Master **Active.** With a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic can make itself as well as an ally fade from the perception of their enemies. The mystic and the ally remain invisible separately and can be detected or remain hidden separately, until they make an attack or take any kind of damage.

WITCH HAMMER

Material: A melee weapon blessed with the ritual *Sanctifying Rite*.

The mystic has learned to shroud its melee weapon with holy and blight-hating fire, just like the legendary Lightbringer Ofelya Attio.

Novice	**Free.** Holy fire encircles the novice's melee weapon and deals 1D4 additional damage, or 1D6 additional damage if the target is an abomination or an undead. This effect is active for the remainder of the scene.
Adept	**Free.** As novice, but the melee weapon now deals 1D4 additional damage or 1D8 additional damage if the target is an abomination or an undead.
Master	**Free.** As novice, but the melee weapon now deals 1D4 additional damage or 1D10 additional damage if the target is an abomination or an undead.

Rituals

RITUALS ARE TIME-CONSUMING spells that take at least one hour to perform. If properly used, a ritual can be a powerful problem-solving tool. Each tradition has developed a variety of distinctive practices and it can be difficult for members of other traditions to acquire the knowledge of specific rituals.

Like powers, rituals can cause Corruption; first when they are learned and then each time they are used. Each tradition has developed their own way of handling Corruption that comes from the use rituals, just like with the Corruption originating from using powers. Independent mystics lack the appropriate schooling and are therefore in an especially tough spot when it comes to suffering Corruption from all forms of mystical practices.

BLOOD BOND

Tradition: Witchcraft

The corrupting effect of magic is of course well known to mystics. Sometimes the Corruption is a necessary price to pay in order to succeed with whatever task the mystic has undertaken. In the same way, the tainting of a familiar can be a necessary sacrifice for the mystic to be able to continue serving its people or its calling.

By using this bond of blood, the mystic can share Corruption with its familiar. The mystic has to make a *Resolute* test whenever a *Blood Bond* ritual is attempted. A successfully performed ritual decreases the mystic's permanent Corruption by 1D4 points, and increases the familiars permanent Corruption by 1D6. The familiar suffers all the usual signs of corruption. Should the familiar turn into an abomination the mystic loses control and is immediately attacked by its former companion.

The ritual costs one (1) *Experience* to perform, whether it is successful or not. The mystic cannot perform the ritual for someone else.

Table 8: Rituals

RITUAL	TRADITION
Blood Bond	Witchcraft
Borrow Beast	Witchcraft
Break Link	Wizardry
Clairvoyance	Wizardry
Command Confession	Theurgy
Desecrating Rite	Sorcery
Enslave	Sorcery
Exchange Shadow	Sorcery
Exorcism	Theurgy
False Terrain	Wizardry
Familiar	Witchcraft
Flaming Servant	Wizardry
Fortune-telling	Witchcraft
Heretic´s Trail	Theurgy
Holy Smoke	Theurgy
Illusion	Wizardry
Judging Bonds	Theurgy
Magic Circle	Wizardry
Nature´s Lullaby	Witchcraft
Necromancy	Witchcraft
Oracle	Theurgy
Patron Saint	Theurgy
Possess	Sorcery
Purging Fire	Theurgy
Quick Growth	Witchcraft
Sanctifying Rite	Theurgy
Sanctum	Wizardry
Seven-league Stride	Wizardry
Soul Stone	Wizardry
Summoning	Witchcraft
Tale of Ashes	Wizardry
Telepathic Interrogation	Wizardry
Turn Weather	Witchcraft
Witch Circle	Witchcraft

BORROW BEAST

Tradition: Witchcraft

By performing this ritual the mystic can possess the body of a small beast and have full control over it for a long period of time. The mystic's body is in a trance during the duration of the ritual. The mystic's mind is thrown back to its own body if the borrowed body is harmed. The same happens if the mystic's body is harmed or exposed to some kind of powerful interference (like being shoved, drenched in water or affected by heat and smoke).

A mystic can manage to remain in this trance for 24 hours, after which the mind returns to its body. After this, *Borrow Beast* cannot be performed again for a time period which is as long as the previous trance lasted.

A mystic who performs *Borrow Beast* and lets its body rest inside a *Witch Circle* has no limitation as to how long it can maintain the trance, since the body gets all the nutrition it needs from the ground inside the circle.

BREAK LINK

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic can break any current mystical links and bonds to an object or a person by trapping the target in a circle of mystical runes and making a successful *Resolute* test. The magic of the object is not affected but the target can no longer be reached with rituals like *Heretic´s Trail* and *Summoning*. In addition, any mystical bonds that may have been created by people visiting the location are negated, which can be used to prevent others from using *Clairvoyance* and *Seven-league Stride* to view or reach the location until they have visited the location again. Finally, *Break Link* can be used to cut the bond between a creature and a mystical artifact (see more on artifacts on page 186).

CLAIRVOYANCE

Tradition: Wizardry

By using this ritual the mystic can observe and listen in on a faraway location, provided that the mystic has personally visited that location before. People at that location with the *Witchsight* ability can realize that they are being watched if they make a successful *[Resolute←Discreet]* test. *Clairvoyance* is blocked by the rituals *Sanctum*, *Sanctifying Rite* and *Witch Circle*.

COMMAND CONFESSION

Tradition: Theurgy

The ritual forces a victim to truthfully answer a number of yes/no questions asked by the mystic. Each question requires a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, and the ritual is disrupted as soon as a test fails. The mystic may not continue to interrogate the victim after that, at least not through the use of this ritual.

DESECRATING RITE

Tradition: Sorcery

The mystic desecrates a specific site, tainting it and in effect punishing those who try to affect it from outside. A desecrated location corrupts those who use rituals like *Clairvoyance*, *Summoning* or *Heretic´s Trail* on it. The desecration gives 1D6 temporary Corruption to those who perform said rituals and if they persist in trying to get information with rituals they will also suffer 1D6 permanent Corruption.

Abominations (creatures belonging to the Abomination monster category) and the undead are drawn to desecrated areas and heal 1D4 points of *Toughness* for each hour they remain on desecrated ground. Even creatures that are only tainted by corruption, but have not transformed into true abominations, feel a strong attraction to desecrated areas and objects.

The *Desecrating Rite* can also be performed over a weapon, which is a requirement for the *Revenant Strike* power.

ENSLAVE

Tradition: Sorcery

The mystic can use this ritual to enslave a creature. The enslavement is linked to a slave rune, carved into the skin somewhere on the victim (usually forehead, chest or neck).

The slave rune and its effect can be revealed by someone using the *Witchsight* ability or the *Holy Smoke* ritual.

The power of the slave rune may be broken with either *Break Link* or *Exorcism*. It is also possible to physically remove the rune from the victim, but not without inflicting 1D6 points of damage and 1D4 points of permanent Corruption. The slave will fight to remain in slavery.

The creature is not controlled by the mystic in every detail, but it will obey the mystic blindly to the best of its ability. The slave can partially reflect upon its situation, cry when it acts against its old nature and so on, but can in no way resist the mystic's latest command.

EXCHANGE SHADOW

Tradition: Sorcery

The mystic can exchange its Shadow with that of another creature by making a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test: the mystic's Shadow looks like the creature's Shadow and vice versa. The

ritual is active for 24 hours and requires a link to the victim for the mystic to even be able to attempt the exchange: a lock of hair, a splash of blood or an item which is important to the target. The target does not notice the switch but those who can see Shadows can of course perceive it (or be tricked by it). *Exchange Shadow* can be negated by *Break Link* or *Exorcism*.

EXORCISM

Tradition: Theurgy

The mystic can banish a spirit possessing a creature or person. The mystic gets three attempts to succeed with a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test; the test's resistance being the *Resolute* of the possessing spirit. It only takes one successful test to banish the possessing force. If all three tests should fail, the spirit possesses the mystic instead.

FALSE TERRAIN

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic can weave an illusion over a location and completely hide what is truly there. Any creature that comes close can see through the illusion with a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. Any creature that either touches or passes through the illusion will, of course, automatically see through the deception. The illusion remains, even if revealed, but fades over time, if not maintained monthly by someone renewing the ritual.

FAMILIAR

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic binds itself to a beast. This beast is not much smarter than others of its kind, but is fiercely loyal to the mystic and the bond between them is made up of mystical energies – they are soul mates. The spiritual bond is so strong that the two can communicate telepathically; the mystic can command the familiar from a distance and also experience whatever the familiar perceives with its senses. The depth of this union also makes it possible for the two to share wounds. If the familiar is wounded the mystic can choose to suffer half of the damage, or if the mystic is wounded half of the damage can be transferred to the familiar. The player decides when damage should be shared in this way. There is also a downside to the mystical bond: should the familiar die the mystic suffers 1D8 points of damage, ignoring Armor.

The familiar is managed by the player as if it was an additional character. It gains *Experience* as a player character, but loses it if it dies (no death tests allowed).

FAMILIAR

A familiar starts with the following statistics, or something similar depending on what seems suitable for the character's bestial friend:

Traits	*Armored* (I), *Natural Weapon* (I)		
Accurate 11, **Persuasive** 5, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 9, **Quick** 13, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 10			
Weapons	Tusks 1D6 (short)		
Defense	13 (Dodge)		
Armor	Animal skin 1D4 (flexible)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8

FLAMING SERVANT

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic awakens a fierce fire creature and binds it to a suit of metal (medium or heavy armor). The servant then walks by the mystic's side like a smoldering and steaming bodyguard, which flares up and turns into a burning warrior in battle. The mystic can only have one *Flaming Servant* bound to itself at any time, and if the *Flaming Servant* perishes in battle, then the suit of armor needs to be repaired by a blacksmith in order for the ritual to be placed on that same armor again.

The *Flaming Servant* is handled by the player as if it was an additional character. It gains *Experience* as a player character, but loses it if it dies (no death tests allowed).

FLAMING SERVANT

A Flaming Servant starts with the following statistics:

Accurate 13, **Persuasive** 5, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 9, **Quick** 11, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 10			
Weapons	Burning sword 1D8		
Defense	9 (Shield)		
Armor	Smoldering scale mail 1D6 (impeding)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8

FORTUNE-TELLING

Tradition: Witchcraft

With a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic may ask a yes/no question regarding the adventure. *Fortune-telling* can only be done once per adventure, and further attempts are only possible when something major has come to pass, potentially changing the future (the Game Master decides if such an event has occurred).

The Chapter Circles of Ordo Magica

Each chapter of Ordo Magica keeps a magic circle and these are more or less always manned by a bored and/or studying novice, making it possible to always reach the chapter telepathically.

Magic circles are the only place where a *Seven-league Stride* can land, but there are also other criteria to be met (see *Seven-league Stride*).

A *Telepathic Interrogation* can be done through a magic circle, which is one of the reasons why wizards are generally reluctant to overuse telepathic communication, especially with mystics that they do not know very well. Even with trusted colleagues transmissions are kept as short as possible – on the crowded career ladder of Ordo Magica there is no room to give even a close friend any competitive advantage, if you can avoid it.

Magic circles must be made physically manifest and can be destroyed by ruining the circle's physical form. The circles of Ordo Magica are usually chiseled into the stone floor and are then inlaid with silver, and yet such a circle can be destroyed in a minute if one has the right tools. It is fully possible to form a temporary circle of sand, but it is easily destroyed by just a couple of careless steps.

HERETIC'S TRAIL

Tradition: Theurgy

With a successful *Resolute* test the mystic can track an abomination or a tainted creature that the mystic has met personally. The tracking is impeccable until the blighted one crosses water – if it does, the ritual must be performed again on the far side of the stream. Should the test fail, the mystic cannot try again until the next day. Also, it is harder to track blight-stricken creatures within larger settlements and in Davokar, giving the mystic a second chance of failing the test; the player must roll twice and if one of those fails, so does the ritual.

HOLY SMOKE

Tradition: Theurgy

The mystic can reveal blight-stricken persons or creatures by using incense and making a successful *Cunning* test. The smoke spreads among those present and gathers around objects and creatures in relation to how corrupted they are: the closer the smoke gathers, the more tainted the creature in question is. The Game Master clearly states if objects or creatures are blight-stricken, blight-marked or thoroughly corrupt.

Holy Smoke can be countered by the *Exchange Shadow* ritual.

ILLUSION

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic creates a false image. This image can move and speak but dissolves if touched by intelligent creatures. The image is completely real until then; it both sounds, smells and appears dangerous. Yet, the image can neither harm nor affect physical objects. The *Illusion* can only perform simple tasks such as guard a location or go towards a village and howl. The effect is active for one scene or one hour if not dissolved before then.

JUDGING BONDS

Tradition: Theurgy

The mystic lets pacifying light flow through chains or shackles holding a person. This prevents the shackled person from using mystical powers and traits that require a *Resolute* test. The light evaporates from the shackles over time, so the effect must be maintained by a renewed ritual each month.

MAGIC CIRCLE

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic establishes a permanent magical circle which can be used to communicate telepathically with persons in other known magical circles. Only mystics with the *Magic Circle* ritual can initiate telepathic communication with another circle, but anyone can receive such a transmission.

The mystic needs not have visited these other circles to be able to communicate with them, but must know with certainty that there is another circle at a specific location to be able to reach it. There must also be a person in the receiving circle for communication to be possible. All who stand within a receiving *Magic Circle* are aware of and may participate in the communication; one cannot discriminate between recipients.

NATURE'S LULLABY

Tradition: *Witchcraft*

By making a successful *Resolute* test the mystic can sing an aspect of dark Davokar to sleep, and can therefore pass by a specific abomination without it reacting – the mystic and its allies becomes more or less invisible to the blighted creature.

If the mystic or its allies behave aggressively, then the effect of the ritual is broken. The same happens if the mystic stops singing, to use a mystical power for example.

NECROMANCY

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic can ask a dead person a number of questions, either by sitting next to its body (just a skull will do, as well) or its grave. Each question demands a successful *Resolute* test, and the dead answers either 'yes' or 'no' by knocking: one knock for 'no' and two for 'yes'. In the case of a failure the mystic can still try to force an answer from the dead, but at the risk of becoming possessed by the spirit; roll *[Resolute←Resolute]*. If the test is failed the mystic becomes possessed and is forced to perform the last wish of the dead, often of a vengeful nature.

ORACLE

Tradition: Theurgy

A successful roll against *Resolute* allows the mystic to ask an open question about the future of the ongoing adventure. This ritual can only be used once per adventure, regardless of what happens. The Game Master's answer must be truthful, but not necessary easily interpreted or too revealing.

PATRON SAINT

Tradition: Theurgy

The mystic is accompanied by a guardian spirit, the soul of a fallen Templar given the mission to once again serve one of the Sun God's chosen. The martyr manifests as a warrior of light that normally is invisible but starts to shine when danger is close, and protects its ward until its second death. Only one *Patron Saint* can be bound to a mystic at a time, and should the saint be defeated a new one must be summoned.

A *Patron Saint* is handled by the player as if it was an additional character. It gains *Experience* as a player character, but loses it if it dies (no death tests allowed).

PATRON SAINT			
A Patron Saint has the trait *Spirit Form* (I), and starts with the following statistics:			
Accurate 13, **Persuasive** 5, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 9, **Quick** 15, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 11, **Vigilant** 10			
Weapons	Flail of light 1D6		
Defense	15 (Dodge)		
Armor	Half damage (see *Spirit Form* I)		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6

POSSESS

Tradition: Sorcery

By performing this ritual, and making a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, the mystic can possess a creature's body and control it completely for a limited time (up to 24 hours). The ritual requires a link to the victim for the mystic to even be able to attempt the possession: a lock of hair, a splash of blood or an item that is important to the intended victim. The victim recalls everything that happens during the possession, but sees these events more as a surreal dream than an actual memory. The victim cannot be made to commit suicide while possessed, but can otherwise be made to go against all its principles.

The possession can be observed as a change in the Shadow, as the victim gains the Shadow of the mystic. The possession can be broken by either *Exorcism* or *Break Link*. If done by using *Exorcism*, the mystic cannot possess the same creature ever again.

The mystic's own body remains in a trance during the possession. If the borrowed body is killed during the possession then the mystic's mind and spirit are thrown back into its own body. The same happens if the mystic's body is harmed or exposed to some kind of powerful interference (like being shoved, drenched in water or affected by heat and smoke, etc.).

PURGING FIRE

Tradition: Theurgy

Corruption is extra dreadful to theurgs, since it represents the foremost proof of the power of darkness. Most theurgs do their utmost to not be tainted by Corruption, and should they fail they can always learn the ritual called *Purging Fire*.

When performing the ritual, the mystic prepares itself with song and prayers before climbing onto a burning pyre to cleanse its body of Corruption. For each turn the theurg stands in the fire, it suffers 1D6 damage, and if a *[Resolute –Damage]* test is passed, one (1) point of permanent Corruption is removed. If the test fails, the mystic throws itself from the pyre and the ritual is interrupted.

Performing the ritual costs one (1) point of *Experience*, whether it is successful or not. The mystic cannot perform the ritual for someone else; only he or she who performs the ritual may benefit from the purifying effect.

QUICK GROWTH

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic can have a seed grow into a full sized plant by using this ritual. The form of the plant is partially under the control of the mystic, and a tree can become a bridge or smash a gate to splinters. However, the mystic has no control over the seasons; the plant takes the form that it naturally has during the current season. The location where this

On Patron Saints

Patron Saints cannot be equipped with other weapons and armor from the start. If the saint uses its experience to gain an Ability related to some kind of weapon the Light Flail transforms accordingly.

Companions in Combat

When an encounter or combat scene suggests a quantity of opponents based on the number of player characters (e.g. [PC+2] Robbers), companions such as a Familiar, Flaming Servant or Patron Saint should be counted among the characters. This also pertains to longstanding NPCs who are effectively members of the adventuring party (e.g. guides, expedition leaders, hired sellswords), so long as they are equipped to affect the outcome of the fight.

seed is planted must meet the conditions required for the plant to grow to full size under natural circumstances. In other words, an oak cannot be planted in a dark cave without light and soil, but maybe vines can take root there and grow into lianas for people to climb.

In a *Witch Circle* created by the same mystic, the ritual *Quick* Growth can be performed regardless of the season.

SANCTIFYING RITE

Tradition: Theurgy

The mystic sanctifies a location, thereby shielding it from outside mystical influence. A sacred location blocks rituals like *Clairvoyance*, *Summoning*, *Heretic´s Trail* and the like, but should any of these rituals be tracking or hunting a person the block is gone as soon as the person leaves the sacred area.

Abominations (creatures that are members of the Abomination monster category) feel sick when getting close to an area that has been sanctified, and suffer 1D4 damage that ignores Armor each turn they remain on holy ground. Creatures that are tainted but have not yet turned into a true abomination experience a strong discomfort when around sacred locations and objects.

Sanctifying Rite can also be performed over a weapon, which is a requirement for the *Witch Hammer* power.

SANCTUM

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic can use this ritual to cover a location (one large or a couple of smaller rooms) in a magical shroud, making it impossible to peek inside or disturb it from outside with mystical powers. *Sanctum* blocks the effect of rituals like *Clairvoyance*, *Summoning* or *Heretic´s Trail*, but should any of these rituals be tracking or hunting a person the block is gone as soon as the person leaves the *Sanctum*.

If there is a *Magic Circle* within an area affected by *Sanctum* (regardless of which was there first), then no one but the mystic who performed the *Sanctum* can use the circle for communication or for the purpose of performing a *Seven-league Stride*.

SEVEN-LEAGUE STRIDE

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic can create a temporary magic circle and use it to teleport itself and one of its allies standing in the circle to another *Magic Circle* that is well known to the mystic. A circle is considered known when the mystic has visited its location and taken some time to study it.

SOUL STONE

Tradition: Wizardry

Corruption was never a problem to wizards before The Great War, since their meticulous practices protected them from blackening their souls. During desperate moments of the war, the battle mages of Ordo Magica took increasingly greater risks in the name of necessity and thereby brought Corruption upon themselves. To counteract this evil they dusted off an ancient and shunned ritual, by which one can capture the soul of a dying creature in a crystal prepared for the purpose. That same ritual proved to work well in order to drain Corruption from a wizard and transfer it to the soul in the stone.

The ritual binds the mystic to the crystal, which then works as an extension of the wizard's soul. The ritual allows the mystic to move 1D4 points of permanent Corruption to the soul stone with a successful *Resolute* test. The stone can hold up to half of the mystic's *Resolute* in Corruption; it darkens as it fills up and detonates if said limit is surpassed. The collected Corruption then rushes back to the mystic, often with a rather nasty result. In the unlikely case that he or she survives that wave of Corruption, it is possible for the mystic to bind itself to a new soul stone and start over.

The ritual costs one (1) point of *Experience* to perform, whether it is successful or not. A wizard that manages to learn the ritual receives a soul stone from its order chapter; other mystics must pay their own way. To buy a soul stone costs 100 thaler.

SUMMONING

Tradition: Witchcraft

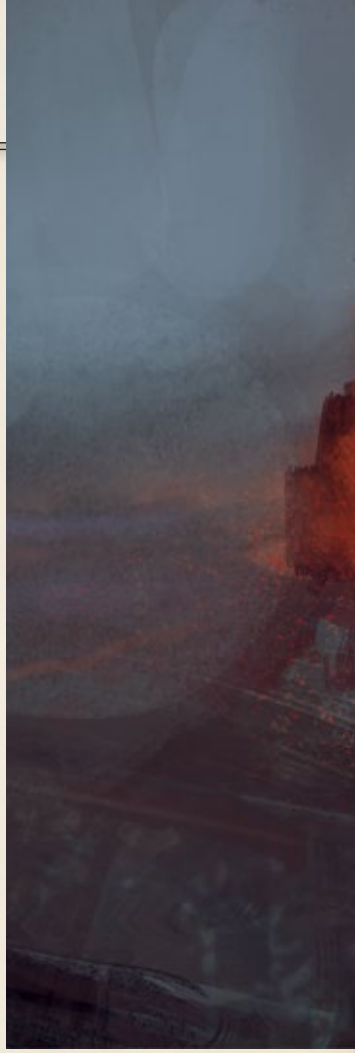
The mystic summons a creature by making a successful *Resolute* test. The creature must then make its way to the location of the summoning. The mystic must have something in its possession related to the summoned creature, either an object of great value to the creature, or an actual part of it, such as a drop of blood or a lock of hair.

The summoned creature will try to reach the location to the best of its abilities but does not necessarily know why it wants to go there, other than following an irresistible calling. The only way to protect a creature that has been summoned is to trick and lure it to step inside a mystically shielded area (the *Sanctifying Rite*, *Witch Circle* or *Sanctum* rituals) or use the *Break Link* ritual.

TALE OF ASHES

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic can read the ashes of a burnt object and thereby discern what the object once was and what happened when it burned – the mystic experiences



A lone and broken pillar standing on the island of Hael in the south of Lake Volgoma carries this inscription, believed to tell of the escape from something called "Symbaroum's Bane".

all impressions from the fire, sees who was there and hears what was being said. A campfire can have much to tell about what happened around it.

TELEPATHIC INTERROGATION

Tradition: Wizardry

The mystic can stretch out its mind and read thoughts. The mystic can receive an answer to a yes/no question from the victim's subconscious by making a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. A failed test severs the telepathic connection and no further attempts can be made with that creature during the adventure. The mystic must touch its victim, and the victim can notice the mind-reading if the mystic fails a *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test. Of course, a helpless and bound victim can do nothing to stop this, but other victims will react. Sleeping victims wake up if the test fails.

TURN WEATHER

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic alters the local weather as he or she sees fit. Fog that obscures one's view, storms that prevent trips or the calming of such storms are all possible to achieve. The ritual takes one hour to perform and the effect remains active for half a day; after that the local weather returns to its natural form.

WITCH CIRCLE

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic breathes new life into a beautiful location and turns it into a witch circle. Witch circles are protected from prying eyes and influences from outside, and the mystic has more or less complete control over what happens within the circle. The mystic decides how things grow and which season it is within, and can with the *Quick Growth* ritual create an environment to mirror its heart's delight.

It is hard to find a *Witch Circle*, even if you know where to look for it. It requires a *[Vigilant←Discreet]* test to even see the circle if encountered in the wilderness. Creatures that do not see the circle will simply walk around it, without knowing they have taken a short detour.

A mystic with both the *Witch Circle* ritual and the *Alchemy* ability can make an extra attempt at *Alchemy* tests when using the ability inside its circle. A mystic with *Quick Growth*, *Witch Circle* and *Alchemy* can make two extra attempts when using *Alchemy*.

A mystic who performs *Borrow Beast* and lets its body rest inside a *Witch Circle* has no limitation as to how long it can maintain the trance, since its body gets all the nutrition it needs from the ground inside the circle.

Equipment

NO CHARACTER IS COMPLETE until he or she is equipped with weapons, supplies and alchemical elixirs. This chapter starts with a description of weapons, armors and their respective qualities, and after that follows a collection of general goods that the characters may need during their adventures. The cost of living is also covered, as well as prices and compensations for common services in Ambria.

Weapons

EACH WEAPON DEALS a certain amount of basic damage to the target's *Toughness*, indicated by a specific die. Some weapons also have qualities that affect how they are used. Furthermore, some abilities can make it possible to use a weapon in other or more refined ways. In these cases, it is important to read the description of the ability thoroughly, to know exactly what the weapon can do in the hands of an experienced character.

HEAVY WEAPONS

Damage: 1D10
Qualities: None. The Bastard Sword is Precise, the Double Axe has the Deep Impact quality, the Heavy Flail is Jointed.

Heavy weapons are distinguished by the fact that they have to be wielded with two hands in order to be used effectively. They have a superior damage effect in melee combat. Pole axe, warhammer and the mighty great sword are all examples of heavy weapons common in the Davokar region.

Bastard Sword: The master smiths of the Pansars forge the finest weapons in Ambria, and the bastard swords of the Queen's Guard are an exquisite testament to that fact, at least when wielded by the right warrior. The weapon is preferably handled with both hands (as a heavy weapon) but can also be used single-handedly with a shield. When wielded with just one hand, the bastard sword loses the Precise quality and instead deals damage like a single-handed weapon.

Double-axe: The barbarian double-axe (not to be confused with the more common pole axe with its single-edged axe head) is aptly named after its twin axe heads and is presumed to be a legacy from the fallen Symbaroum. In those days the double-axe was a weapon as well as a symbol of status and standing. Even though the knowledge of metallurgy has dwindled since the fall of Symbaroum these powerful weapons can still be forged, often made for particularly prominent warriors. Ambrians consider the double-axe crude and savage, fit for barbarians and few else, but its shape is well known because of its similarity to the royal rune, Labrys.

Heavy Flail: The heavy flail is a Jointed weapon, where a metal ball – often spiked – attached to a two-handed shaft by a chain is swung against the enemy. It is not easy to parry a flail since the metal

ball often strikes around the parrying weapon or shield to find its target.

The heavy flail comes in a number of shapes, like the traditional wooden two-handed shaft attached to a chain that ends in a spiked metal head. There are also variants with spiked pieces of metal that are linked together, as well as models where two or three chains and metal heads share the same shaft. Regardless of design, they all share the weight of the flail and the fact that they are difficult to block.

LONG WEAPONS

Damage: 1D8

Qualities: Long. The Halberd has Deep Impact, the Pike is Precise, and the Quarterstaff is Blunt

Long weapons have the advantage of superior reach and give the user Free Attacks against enemies that are not armed with Long weapons themselves. A Long weapon can be used in one hand, but then loses the Long quality since the user is forced to hold it higher up on the grip to control the weapon. Spear and staff are examples of Long weapons.

Halberd: The halberd, known as the pole axe among barbarians, has elements of both the Long and the Heavy weapon since it is combining the point of a spear with the head of an axe. It cannot thrust as quickly as the spear, but its sweeping chop can have a devastating effect.

Pike: The slender shaft and fire-tempered steel point of the Ambrian pike slides towards the target with great precision.

Quarterstaff: The simpler wooden staff, often made from heavy wood that has been hardened with fire, has the reach of a Long weapon but lacks the effect of steel-tipped weapons.

Table 9: Weapons

WEAPON	DAMAGE	QUALITY	COST
Heavy Weapon	**1D10**		**10 thaler**
Bastard Sword, two-handed		Precise	50 thaler
Double-axe	1D10+1	Deep Impact	50 thaler
Heavy Flail		Jointed	50 thaler
Long Weapon	**1D8**	**Long**	**3 thaler**
Halberd	1D8+1	Deep Impact	15 thaler
Pike		Precise	15 thaler
Quarterstaff	1D6	Blunt	1 shilling
Projectile Weapon			
Crossbow	1D10		8 thaler
Arbalest	1D10+1	Deep Impact	40 thaler
Bow	1D8		5 thaler
Longbow		Precise	25 thaler
10 arrows or bolts			1 thaler
Single-Handed Weapon	**1D8**		**5 thaler**
Crow's Beak	1D8+1	Deep Impact	25 thaler
Fencing Sword		Precise	25 thaler
Flail		Jointed	25 thaler
Shield	**1D4**		**3 thaler**
Buckler		Flexible	15 thaler
Steel Shield		Balanced	15 thaler
Short Weapon	**1D6**	**Short**	**1 thaler**
Parrying Dagger		Balanced	5 thaler
Stiletto	1D6+1	Deep Impact	5 thaler
Throwing Weapon	**1D6**		**2 thaler**
Spear Sling	1D6+1	Deep Impact	10 thaler
Unarmed Attack	**1D4**	**Short**	**—**
Battle Claw	1D4+1	Deep Impact	1 thaler

Where Ambrians prefer the sword the barbarian warrior favors the axe.

PROJECTILE WEAPONS

Damage: Crossbow 1D10, bow 1D8, sling 1D6
Qualities: The Arbalest has the Deep Impact quality and the Longbow is Precise.

Projectile weapons are meant to be used over greater distances and need some time to reload.

The crossbow is loaded with bolts, the bows fire arrows and slings throw sharpened rocks. A crossbow requires a Movement Action to be reloaded, while reloading a bow or a sling counts as a Free Action. Bow, crossbow and sling are all examples of projectile weapons.

Arbalest: The arbalest is a heavy Ambrian crossbow with a bow of feather steel, which gives its bolts a bit of extra punch.

Longbow: The longbow is a reliable and proven weapon in the Ambrian army, and since The Great War it is often carried by farmers who make up the backbone of the kingdom's archer companies.

SHIELDS

Armor: Provides +1 in Defense
Qualities: None. Bucklers are Flexible, Steel Shields are Balanced.

Shields make it difficult to hit the wielder with melee, as well as ranged, attacks. They are often combined with a single-handed weapon, or with a single-handed weapon and a number of additional throwing weapons.

Buckler: The buckler is a small shield commonly carried by elite archers and pikemen, since it is agile enough to be strapped to the arm while still allowing the use of both hands to wield a weapon. The Buckler is too light to be used with the *Shield Fighter* ability.

Steel Shield: The steel shield is as strong as the common wooden shields, but both thinner and more easily maneuvered.

SHORT WEAPONS

Damage: 1D6
Qualities: Short. The Parrying Dagger is Balanced and the Stiletto has the Deep Impact quality.

Short weapons can be drawn quickly and are easily hidden. Daggers and short swords are examples of Short weapons.

Parrying Dagger: The parrying dagger, with its wide and v-shaped cross-guard, has become very popular in Yndaros, and is often wielded together with a fencing sword.

Stiletto: The slender and agile stiletto is a dagger whose razor sharp point stabs deeply – the weapon of an assassin.

SINGLE-HANDED WEAPONS

Damage: 1D8
Qualities: None. A Crow's Beak has the Deep Impact quality, a Fencing Sword is Precise, a Flail is Jointed.

The category of Single-handed weapons covers all kinds of weapons that can be wielded in one hand. Axe, saber, sword and war hammer are all examples of single-handed weapons.

Crow's Beak: A less elegant, but just as effective weapon is the Crow's Beak, also known as a Kandorian War Pick after the city in Alberetor where it was first forged. The Crow's Beak is a club whose metal head is fitted with a spike or a beak of steel, in order to punch through armor more easily. After the escape to Yndaros, the smiths of the Kandorian War Pick settled down in the district of Old Kadizar where they have continued to craft their dreaded weapons.

Fencing Sword: In Yndaros, the Ambrian fencing sword is considered to be of the highest fashion, an instrument with superior precision made from strong but flexible steel. It is often combined with the duelist's favorite, the parrying dagger, which gives the lightly armored fighter a stronger defense in combat.

Flail: The single-handed cousin of the heavy flail.

THROWING WEAPONS

Damage: 1D6
Qualities: None. Spear Sling has the Deep Impact quality.

Throwing weapons are hurled single-handedly over short distances. They are usually used before melee combat is initiated, and are therefore often combined with a shield. Throwing axe, throwing knife and throwing spear are all examples of this weapon group.

Spear Sling: The barbarians of eastern Davokar , and especially the members of clan Karohar, prefer the use of spear slings – a throwing arm with a hook that is attached to the end of a short spear in order to throw it with tremendous force.

UNARMED ATTACKS

Damage: 1D4
Qualities: Short. The Battle Claw has the Deep Impact quality.

Unarmed attacks are usually used as the last resort of cultural beings and are less effective than the natural weapons of beasts and abominations in almost all respects. Yet, with the *Natural Warrior* ability even an unarmed character can inflict

considerable amounts of damage to its enemies. An elbow, a bite, a punch, a head-butt, a kick as well as the use of brass knuckles are examples of Unarmed Attacks.

Battle Claw: The clan Karohar in southern Davokar has developed a clawed gauntlet that you wear on your hand and whose long claws simulate those of a mare cat.

Armor

EACH SUIT OF ARMOR provides a certain amount of protection, indicated by a specific die. Some armor also has qualities that affect how the armor works mechanically. Just like weapons, different cultures have developed a number of diverse kinds of armor, all with their respective advantages and disadvantages.

LIGHT ARMOR

Armor: 1D4
Qualities: Impeding (–2). Many kinds of light armor have the Flexible quality, wolf skin armor has the Cumbersome quality.

Light armor is easy to come by and does not limit the wearer's capabilities substantially in acrobatic situations or when performing stealthy maneuvers. Yet it has a negative effect when using mystical powers. Hardened, ring and studded leather are all examples of light armor.

Blessed Robe: The priest robes of the theurgs are blessed and protected by benevolent forces so that the Church's finest can travel safely throughout the kingdom, and beyond.

Order Cloak: Most novice mages of Ordo Magica are given a protective cloak in time for their first long journey. These cloaks are embroidered with warding runes, which increases the chance of the novice surviving to complete its appointed task.

Witch Gown: Witches bind protective spirits in carved pieces of bone and the skulls of fallen enemies, and attach them to their clothing for effective protection.

Wolf Skin: For poor barbarian scouts the cheap, cumbersome wolf skin armor is a common alternative; skin that has been tanned in the most simple way and sewn together into some kind of passable protection.

Woven Silk: Woven silk is the finest light armor available, since the close weave of its threads withstands stabs and cuts far better than its weight suggests. Woven silk has been used by both barbarians and Ambrians for a long time and some scholars speculate that the technique originally comes from the elves, possibly dating as far back as the days of the Iron Pact.

Table 10: Armor

ARMOR	PROTECTION	QUALITY	COST
Light	**1D4**	**Impeding (–2)**	**2 thaler**
Blessed Robe		Flexible	10 thaler
Order Cloak		Flexible	10 thaler
Witch Gown		Flexible	10 thaler
Wolf Skin		Cumbersome	1 thaler
Woven Silk		Flexible	10 thaler
Medium	**1D6**	**Impeding (–3)**	**5 thaler**
Crow Armor		Cumbersome	2 thaler
Lacquered Silk Cuirass		Flexible	25 thaler
Heavy	**1D8**	**Impeding (–4)**	**10 thaler**
Full Plate		Flexible	50 thaler

MEDIUM ARMOR

Armor: 1D6
Qualities: Impeding (–3). Some have the Flexible quality; Crow Armor has the Cumbersome quality.

Medium armor offers better protection than the light versions but at the cost of being more restrictive to the wearer's movements. However, this downside is considered an acceptable trade-off by most melee combatants. Scale- and chainmail are examples of medium armor.

Crow Armor: Medium armor is more expensive than light, which is the reason why many warriors have picked, riveted and bound together a so-called "Crow Armor" of their own. It is cheap, but far more difficult to move around in.

Lacquered Silk Cuirass: Barbarian warriors that have earned their place in the guard of a wealthy clan chieftain can sometimes be seen wearing a cuirass of lacquered silk, an armor that despite its apparent lightness protects like a breast plate. According to legend, the secret of lacquered silk was given to humankind by the elves, in a time when the Iron Pact was still strong and humans battled the parasitic darkness of Symbaroum.

HEAVY ARMOR

Armor: 1D8
Qualities: Impeding (–4), Ambrian Full Plate has the Flexible quality.

Those melee combatants that can afford it usually chose increased protection at the cost of even greater restrictions to their movement. A

self-respecting knight wears chainmail enforced by shoulder, knee and elbow plates, while those with the means tend to order themselves a personalized set of full plate armor.

Full Plate: Personalized full plate armor is available for those of sufficient means, and offers the best protection available with less restriction than many other kinds of heavy armor.

Qualities

WEAPONS AND ARMOR have different qualities, described in the following. If the description of a quality ever comes into conflict with the rules of an ability, then the ability overrules the quality.

FLEXIBLE

The armor is unusually flexible and is less Impeding than its protective capability would suggest. For this reason a Flexible light armor has no penalty at all on *Defense* tests, sneaking and the use of mystic powers. A Flexible medium armor has a (–1) penalty and a Flexible heavy armor (–2).

A Flexible shield can be carried strapped to the arm, ready to use, while at the same time allowing the bearer to use both hands for wielding a Long or Heavy weapon. Even ranged weapons can be used without problem together with a Flexible shield.

BALANCED

The weapon is so well balanced that it is extra effective when parrying. The weapon provides +1 in Defense.

BLUNT

The weapon lacks either cutting or piercing abilities, and therefore uses one (1) Effect Die lower than other weapons of its kind. The quarterstaff, a Long weapon with the Blunt quality, deals 1D6 damage instead of 1D8, which is the usual damage for long weapons.

CUMBERSOME

It is difficult to move around in this armor and its Impeding effect is therefore one point higher than usual; a Cumbersome light armor has a penalty of (–3), a medium of (–4) and a heavy of (–5).

DEEP IMPACT

The weapon has qualities that makes it even more deadly. Maybe its blade can pierce armor more easily or the weapon itself is so massive that it gets extra crushing power. Either way, the weapon deals +1 extra damage.

What do you get for a thaler, a shilling, an orteg?

A THALER

A simple weapon or an even simpler suit of armor, or a common tool such as a scythe, or a cow, a pig, a dozen chickens or half a dozen sheep.

A SHILLING

A meal and the most simple of lodgings in a city or town.

AN ORTEG

A meager meal in a town, a meal and a place on a hayloft in the countryside.

IMPEDING

The armor hampers any agile movements and gives a penalty to tests against *Defense*, sneaking and the use of mystic powers. The penalty depends on whether the armor is light (–2), medium (–3) or heavy (–4).

JOINTED

The weapon is jointed, letting the head of the weapon strike past or around blocking weapons or shields, making it harder to parry. The length of the chain also makes the attacks difficult to evade. Even if a parry is successful, the attack hits if the die lands on an odd number; in which case the weapon deals 1D6 damage. This secondary damage is not affected by any abilities – it remains 1D6 regardless of the attacker's other abilities.

Example: *Grumpa defends herself against an attack from an enemy armed with a flail, a Jointed weapon. Her Defense is 6 and she rolls a 5, which should have been a successful parry – but Jointed weapons still hit on an odd number. Grumpa takes damage, though less than normal and none of the enemy's abilities can affect the damage, not even the passive ones. In the next turn, Grumpa is defending herself again and rolls 4. This defense is successful, since the result of her Defense test was an even number.*

LONG

The weapon has the advantage of superior length and reach, giving the wielder one Free Attack each turn against an opponent that comes into range of melee combat, as long as said opponent is not also armed with a Long weapon.

PRECISE

The weapon is designed to be easy to wield and therefore gives +1 to attack tests.

SHORT

The weapon can be drawn as a Free Action and can be used with the *Feint* ability.

Goods & Services

HERE FOLLOWS EQUIPMENT that the characters may need to survive on the road, as well as goods and services they might seek for a comfortable existence during their travels and in between adventures.

ALCHEMICAL ELIXIRS

The peoples of the Davokar region possess a vast knowledge of how to transform the herbs, fruits and bodily organs of nature into useful elixirs. Among the barbarians it is usually the witches who create

the elixirs, while Ambrian decoctions are often made by specialized craftsmen and artisans.

Antidote (Weak): A weak antidote lowers the effect of a poison by one degree; a strong poison becomes moderate, a moderate poison becomes weak and a weak poison is completely neutralized. The antidote does not affect any damage that a character has already suffered. Requires a passed *Cunning* test to take effect.

Antidote (Moderate): A moderate antidote lowers the effect of a poison by two degrees; a strong poison becomes weak, while both moderate and weak poisons are completely neutralized. The antidote does not affect any damage that a character has already suffered. Requires a passed *Cunning* test to take effect.

Antidote (Strong): A strong antidote lowers the effect of a poison by three degrees, which usually means that the poison is completely neutralized. The antidote does not affect any damage that a character has already suffered. Requires a passed *Cunning* test to take effect.

Choking Spores: Choking Spores are produced from Davokar's lichens and mushrooms. The elixir is used specifically with the *Strangler* ability.

Concentrated Magic: A dose of mystical essence, which gives a mystic a second chance to succeed with a *Resolute* test the next time he or she attempts to use a mystical power.

Eye Drops: These drops will immediately return the gift of sight to a temporarily blinded creature.

Elemental Essence: When applying a dose of elemental essence, either one weapon, four throwing weapons or all the arrows/bolts in a quiver deal 1D4 elemental damage for the duration of a scene. The alchemist must choose which element to prepare: fire, cold, acid or lightning.

Elixir of Life: Consuming an Elixir of Life gives the drinker regenerative powers that heal 1D6 points of *Toughness* during 1D6 turns, on the character's initiative. Sadly the character also suffers 1 temporary corruption for each turn the elixir is in effect.

Ghost Candle: The fumes from this candle make invisible things at a location or in a room visible.

Herbal Cure: An herbal cure consists of an alchemical poultice coupled with bandages. It smells vile but heals 1 point of *Toughness*. The herbal cure has greater effect if used by a character with the *Medicus* ability.

Poison (Weak): A weak poison deals 1D4 damage each turn for 1D4 turns.

Poison (Moderate): A moderate poison deals 1D6 damage each turn for 1D6 turns.

Poison (Strong): A strong poison deals 1D8 damage each turn for 1D8 turns.

Table 11: Alchemical elixirs

ALCHEMICAL ELIXIR	COST
Antidote	
Weak	1 thaler
Moderate	2 thaler
Strong	3 thaler
Choking Spores	2 thaler
Concentrated Magic	1 thaler
Eye Drops	2 thaler
Elemental Essence	2 thaler
Elixir of Life	6 thaler
Ghost Candle	2 thaler
Herbal Cure	1 thaler
Poison	
Weak	2 thaler
Moderate	4 thaler
Strong	6 thaler
Protective Oil	2 thaler
Spore Bomb	3 thaler
Waybread	1 thaler
Wraith Dust	2 thaler

Protective Oil: The alchemical oil protects against elemental damage by providing 1D4 additional Armor against one of the elements for the duration of a scene. The alchemist must choose which of the elements that the oil shields against: fire, cold, acid or lightning.

Spore Bomb: The spore bomb is used together with the *Strangler* ability.

Waybread: One loaf of this rich waybread corresponds to a week's food supply for one person.

Wraith Dust: The wraith dust forces an incorporeal being (a creature with the monstrous trait *Spirit Form*) to take physical form for the duration of a scene. The dust must be thrown with a *[Accurate←Defense]* test; if hit the spirit takes damage as living creatures do.

EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

In the towns and cities of Ambria, a person with money in his or her pocket can purchase almost anything that adventurers and explorers might need. There is also the possibility to pay for numerous services, such as a bath and a shave, having a map drawn or hiring the protection of bodyguards.

Goods and services grow scarcer both in the countryside and among the clans, so do not be surprised if the trader asks for a favor rather than coins as payment, should you actually find what you seek.

Equipment and problem-solving

If a piece of equipment can be used to facilitate problem-solving or make a certain task easier to perform, then add +1 to the active Attribute. Decide within the gaming group from case to case.

Table 12: Equipment

EQUIPMENT	COST
Bandages	5 ortegs
Bear trap	5 shillings
Blanket	2 ortegs
Brass bell	6 shillings
Climbing equipment	1 thaler
Crayons	1 orteg
Drinking horn	2 ortegs
Drum	3 shillings
Field equipment, containing:	**5 shillings***
Bedroll	5 ortegs
Cooking pan	1 orteg
Firewood	2 ortegs
Flint and steel	2 ortegs
Rope	1 shilling
Waterskin	3 shillings
Fishing line and hook	3 ortegs
Fishing net	1 shilling
Flute	3 shillings
Grappling hook	1 thaler
Horn	4 ortegs
Hour glass	4 thaler
Ink and feather	1 shilling
Ladder	7 ortegs
Lamp oil	1 orteg
Lantern	4 ortegs
Lockpicks	1 thaler
Needle and thread	1 orteg
Paper	3 ortegs
Parchment	2 ortegs
Pocket mirror	7 thaler
Rope ladder	3 shillings
Snares	3 shillings
Snow shoes	5 shillings
Soap	5 ortegs
Spy glass	10 thaler
Tankard	1 orteg
Tent	3 shillings
Torch	1 orteg
Wax candle	4 ortegs
Weapon maintenance kit	5 shillings
Whetstone	4 ortegs
Whistle	2 shillings

*Field equipment is free for new characters

Table 13: Buildings

BUILDING	COST
Croft	10 thaler
Farm	100 thaler
Watch tower, wood	100 thaler
Watch tower, stone	400 thaler
Fort, wood	500 thaler
Estate	1 000 thaler
Fort, stone	2 000 thaler
Keep	5 000 thaler
Castle	10 000+ thaler

Table 14: Transport

TRANSPORT	COST
Canoe	2 thaler
Cart	1 thaler
Galley	1 000 thaler
Mule	3 thaler
Riding horse	
Light	5 thaler
Heavy	7 thaler
Rowing boat	3 thaler
River boat	200 thaler
Sleigh	2 thaler
Wagon	5 thaler

Table 15: Containers

CONTAINER	COST
Backpack	1 thaler
Barrel	4 ortegs
Basket	2 ortegs
Belt pouch	5 ortegs
Chest	
Small	3 shillings
Large	1 thaler
Clay pitcher	5 ortegs
Coin purse	3 ortegs
Decorated box	2–5 thaler
Glass vial	1 shilling
Knapsack	1 shilling
Quiver	1 shilling
Sack	2 ortegs

Table 16: Farm Animals

FARM ANIMALS	COST
Bull	10 thaler
Chicken	8 ortegs
Cow	1 thaler
Dog	1 shilling
Donkey	3 thaler
Ox	4 thaler
Pig	1 thaler
Rooster	5 shillings
Sheep	15 ortegs

Table 17: Income

OCCUPATION	DAILY INCOME
Artisan	1 thaler
Knight, freelance	2 thaler
Laborer, countryside	1 orteg
Laborer, town	1 shilling
Medicus	1 thaler
Sellsword	**1 shilling**
Rider	1 thaler

Table 18: Clothing

CLOTHES	COST
Torn rags	5 ortegs
Simple garb	1 shilling
Artisan's garb	5 shillings
Burgher's garb	1 thaler
Noble's garb	10+ thaler
Boots	1 shilling
Cap	2–4 ortegs
Cloak	2–6 ortegs
Coat	5–10 ortegs
Dress	1–10 shillings
Gown	1–5 ortegs
Hat	2–4 ortegs
Mask	5–10 ortegs
Pants	1–5 ortegs
Robe	1–5 shillings
Scarf	1–2 ortegs
Shirt	1–4 ortegs
Skirt	5–10 ortegs
Tunic	2–7 ortegs

Table 19: Expenses

SERVICE	COST
Bed and two meals per day	
Countryside hayloft	1 orteg
Inn, countryside	5 ortegs
Inn, town	1+ shilling
Camp Life, per day	
Foot soldier	5 ortegs
Rider	5 shillings
Knight	1 thaler
Feast, per person	
Inn, countryside	1 shilling
Inn, town	1 thaler
Food & drink, countryside	(×10 in a town)
Beer/Ale	2 ortegs
Bread	1 orteg
Casserole	2 ortegs
Cheese	2 ortegs
Meat	5 ortegs
Stew	1 orteg
Wine	3 ortegs

Table 20: Services

SERVICE	COST
Bath, at an inn	3 ortegs
Bodyguard	1 shilling/day
Cartographer	1 thaler
Medicus	1 shilling + cost for any alchemical preparations
Mystic, ritual	10 thaler
Road/city toll	1 orteg
Washing of clothes	7 ortegs

Table 21: Tools

TOOL	COST
Artisan tool	1 thaler
Chain	1 thaler
Hammer	1 thaler
Mining pick	5 shilling
Scythe	1 thaler
Shovel	3 shilling
Sledgehammer	1 thaler

Player's Rules

THE FOLLOWING SECTION covers the rules that you, as a player, are expected to know: the rules for combat, dying and healing. Problem-solving and social challenges are only discussed briefly, since it is the Game Master's job to handle the rules involving those kinds of situations within the game. Finally, there are rules describing how you as a player can use *Experience* to improve your character.

YOUR CHARACTER is often going to find him- or herself engaged in combat. The rules of combat are more detailed than other aspects of the ruleset since it is your character's life that is on the line. If you are not tactical, committed and brave, then there is a risk that the battle will end with the death of you or your companions.

Combat in Symbaroum should be colorful, and there is a lot of room for you and your friends to describe your actions and to immerse yourself in the combat, the attacks and the escapes. The Game Master is there to decide how to realize your ideas and strategies so do not be afraid to get creative.

Example: *In order to help illustrate specific rules, we will use the example character Grumpa, the ogre that was created by our imagined player Mira in the first part of The Player's Book. Grumpa the Ogre is a member of the White Dove, a theater company that travels through Davokar towards the high plateau of Karvosti.*

On their way the company faces a band of brutal brigands, crude thugs who would rather steal the possessions of others than risk their own lives in the forest's blight-infested ruins. The company is not interested in handing over their honestly stolen riches and so combat begins. Let us see how it goes for our ogrely heroine in the brawl...

Turn Order

THE CHARACTER with the highest *Quick* can choose to either act first or to wait. You may choose to place your Initiative later in the turn order, but once the order is established it cannot be changed. If two persons have the same *Quick* value, then compare *Vigilant*. If they still share the same value, roll 1D20: the highest outcome goes first.

COMBAT WITH WEAPONS READY

When combat starts it is important to know whether the combatants have their weapons drawn or not. Also, remember that Long weapons get a Free Attack against one enemy during the first turn of melee combat, provided that the enemy does not have a Long weapon as well.

Example: *The brigand has Quick 10, just like Grumpa, but he has Vigilant 11 against Grumpa's 9, so he has the initiative. Yet, Grumpa is armed with a staff with the Long quality. One of the brigands approaches Grumpa with a drawn sword, but thanks to having the advantage of reach, Grumpa performs her Free Attack and attacks before the brigand. Then the Initiative goes to the brigand, and after that it is Grumpa's usual turn. In the second turn, Grumpa can no longer take advantage of her long staff, and so the brigand attacks first.*

SURPRISE

It usually requires a successful *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test to surprise someone. If a group tries to surprise another group, instead of individual against individual, use the attackers' lowest *Discreet* modified by the defenders' highest *Vigilant*. He or she who surprises an enemy is allowed to make one Free Attack against said enemy at the start of the turn. After that, follow the regular turn order, based on the combatants' *Quick* values, as described above.

If any of the combatants are surprised at the start of combat, they must draw their weapons. All Short weapons can be unsheathed as a Free Action, thanks to their small weight and length. To unsheathe a weapon is otherwise considered a Movement Action. Another option is of course to not draw any weapons and instead choose to use punches and kicks; an individual's or creature's natural weapons are always considered ready and do not have to be drawn or unsheathed.

Example: *Another brigand tries to sneak up on Grumpa from behind. Our ogre is in trouble! The sneaking brigand has Discreet 10 and Grumpa has Vigilant 10. Mira rolls 12 and our poor ogre is surprised. This works the same way as with a Long weapon, the enemy can make a Free Attack against Grumpa, and then the turn order continues as usual.*

Actions in Combat

IN COMBAT, your character will kick and fight, slash and stab, parry and dodge. The character does this with his or her two Actions per turn; one Combat Action and one Movement Action. The Combat Action can be replaced with an additional Movement Action, and Movement Actions can be replaced by other kinds of Actions.

Besides Combat and Movement Actions, every combatant may perform Reactive Actions, such as performing Free Attacks and *Defense* tests. There are also Free Actions, Actions that are either brief or can be made in parallel with other Actions. All Actions, except Reactions, are performed on the character's Initiative. Reactions are performed as it sounds, as a reaction to an enemy's Action or other circumstances.

COMBAT ACTION

The most important Action that can be performed in a turn is the attack. It is with this Action that you character attacks its enemies and attempts to harm them with its weapon. The attack is preferably performed with an Active ability, if your character masters such a skill. Passive abilities always act together with active ones.

The attack is made with *[Accurate←Defense]*. Note that some abilities can allow you to attack using other Attributes besides *Accurate*, and calculate *Defense* using something else than *Quick*.

A Combat Action does not have to be an attack. To provide first aid to someone or to use any other active ability also counts as a Combat Action.

A Combat Action can be replaced with an additional Movement Action, but not the opposite: a Movement Action cannot be replaced with an additional Combat Action.

Example: *When it is Grumpa's turn to act, she choose to attack using the mystical power Confusion. It's performed with a [Resolute←Resolute] test. The enemy has Resolute 9 (+1) so Grumpa, who has Resolute 15, must roll 16 or lower (15+1) in order to Confuse the enemy. Mira rolls 11 and the enemy stops in his steps, confused. Maybe our ogre has a chance to survive her first combat!*

The Character's Action Economy

DURING A TURN A CHARACTER MAY:

Perform a Combat Action, such as attacking, perform first aid or use an active ability. The Combat Action can be replaced with an additional Movement Action.

Perform a Movement Action, such as moving 10 paces, drawing a weapon, reloading a weapon or using an item or an elixir.

Perform an unlimited amount of Reactions, such as defending itself or performing Free Attacks.

Perform an unlimited amount of Free Actions, such as giving an order or calling out a warning.

Stand up from lying on the ground, which either costs a whole turn (two Movement Actions) or one Movement Action if the character succeeds with a *Quick* test.

MOVEMENT ACTION

The Movement Action represents a meaningful movement in combat. The Movement Action is done on a character's Initiative. Normally, the exact distance is not of any great importance. What does matter in combat is who can make a melee attack and who can use ranged attacks.

If a more exact distance needs to be calculated, then a Movement Action represents 10 paces (10 meters), but characters who engage an enemy in melee combat naturally stop by the enemy if the distance is shorter than that (in other words, the character does not have to move the full 10 paces).

Movement Actions are used to:

- Reach an enemy and engage it in melee combat.
- Take up a flanking position next to an enemy already fighting an ally.
- Move past an enemy to reach another one that stands further away (enemies that are bypassed may perform a Free Attack).
- Withdraw from melee combat (which allows the enemy to perform a Free Attack against the character). If fighting multiple enemies, then each enemy is allowed a Free Attack.
- Create a clear line of sight to an obscured enemy.

Instead of moving, the Movement Action can be used to perform other kinds of Actions:

- Switch weapons
- Stand up from a prone position (requires a *Quick* test).
- Drink/apply an elixir to yourself.

Example: *Our dear ogre is considered flanked, since she is standing between two brigands – meaning that the brigands have an Advantage against the big brute. Grumpa solves this with a Movement Action, which triggers a Free Attack from each of her enemies (lucky that Grumpa confused one of them!). The ogre moves around the confused enemy, and receives a Free Attack from the other brigand. After making her move, the ogre has both the brigands in front of her, and is no longer flanked.*

REACTIONS

Reactions are quick responses or follow-ups to other Actions or circumstances. They can be performed at any time during the turn and are not tied to the character's Initiative. The character can perform as many Reactions as is called for per turn, as long as there are triggers to react to. Reactions can use the effect of passive abilities, but not of active ones.

FREE ATTACK

There are situations when your character will have the opportunity to make a Free Attack with his or her weapon. This most commonly happens when the character is armed with a Long weapon, when an enemy tries to flee from an ongoing melee combat or when an opponent tries to run past the character in order to reach someone or something behind it. There are also some abilities which trigger Free Attacks under special circumstances.

Free attacks can use the effect of passive abilities but not of active ones, and normally the character can only gain one Free Attack per triggering factor and turn – if two enemies try to withdraw from melee only 1 Free Attack is gained, but if one withdraws and one runs past, the character gains one Free Attack on each.

Example: *Let's go back to the Free Attack our ogre Grumpa was allowed to make against one of the brigands at the start of the battle. Grumpa had no abilities that affected her use of the staff, but if she had (like the Polearm Mastery ability) then the passive parts of that ability (e.g. the 1D8 damage at novice level) would have come into play when Grumpa performed her Free Attack.*

Make the Combat Come Alive

How an attack looks depends on the situation and the location where the battle takes place. Maybe the character is swinging an axe and hits its enemy both in the arm and in the stomach, or a crossbow is being fired from the top of a wall and the bolt slams into the chest of its target. It is important to make the attacks come alive for the battle to be perceived as dramatic.

DEFENSE

You are allowed to attempt to defend yourself against any attacks that your character is aware of. The character's *Defense* is usually based on *Quick*, then modified by such things as armor qualities and whether or not the character carries a shield.

When a character is attacked, defense is tested as *[Defense←Accurate]*. If the test is successful the character has avoided the attack by either parrying or dodging it. If this test fails, the attack hits and deals damage if the weapon's damage value is higher than the outcome of the roll for the character's Armor.

Example: *Our brave ogre heroine is relentlessly attacked by brigands and has to defend herself. Luckily enough, Defense is a Reaction, so Grumpa may defend herself an unlimited number of times each turn. Grumpa's Defense is 6 [10, –2 for her leather apron and –2 for her Robust trait]. The Game Master tells her that the attacking enemy's Accurate is –1: this is bad since it leaves Grumpa with an effective Defense of 5 [6–1]. The attack comes and Mira rolls 9 on 1D20 – Grumpa is hit. It is good that Grumpa is an ogre and hence much tougher than most when it comes to withstanding damage.*

Damage & Healing

DAMAGE LOWERS the victim's *Toughness* and a creature dies when its *Toughness* reaches zero – unless it is a player character, in which case he or she is regarded as being dying instead. Damage and wounds can be healed in a number of ways, described in this section.

TOUGHNESS

The character's *Toughness* is equal to his or her value in the *Strong* Attribute. However, it can never be lower than 10.

PAIN THRESHOLD

A character's *Pain Threshold* is half of its *Strong* value, rounded up. The actual *Strong* value is used to calculate this figure, even if it is lower than 10.

When a creature suffers damage that exceeds its *Pain Threshold*, from a single attack and after Armor has been subtracted from the damage value, one of the following things happens. Note that it is the player who decides between the two, both for the character when it suffers the damage, as well as the enemy if it is the character that inflicts the pain.

- The affected creature is knocked down and has to get up (see Special Actions).
- The one who deals the damage is allowed to perform an immediate Free Attack against the affected creature.

Example: *Our ogre Grumpa has Strong 11, and therefore Toughness 11 and Pain Threshold 6. Grumpa fights savagely against two brigands and both brigands manage to land a hit on our heroine. The damage, after Armor, is 7 (4+3). Grumpa's Threshold has not been exceeded, since none of these hits dealt 7 damage on its own. It takes a lot for a pair of brigands to bring our robust heroine down. The fight continues!*

Later in the adventure, Grumpa encounters a blight-stricken Aboar. Now the danger is for real, since a corrupted behemoth like that is capable of bringing down even the mightiest warrior. Grumpa is hit by an attack and suffers 8 points of damage after her Armor has been subtracted. This surpasses her Pain Threshold value of 7, and Grumpa's player decides that the ogre falls butt-first into the mud as a consequence of such a splendid hit.

DYING CHARACTERS

Monsters and non-player characters die as soon as their *Toughness* reaches 0, unless the Game Master wants something else to happen. In any case, the rules for player characters are different.

When a character reaches 0 *Toughness* it collapses and is considered to be dying. At this point, it cannot help itself in any way. Each turn thereafter the player is forced to make a Death Test with 1D20 on the character's Initiative. This test is repeated until someone else either stabilizes the dying character with an herbal cure, the *Medicus* ability or mystical healing – or until the player rolls a 1 and wakes up, or a 20 and dies.

Example: *It is not easy for Grumpa when the tainted aboar rams the fallen ogre once more and beats her Toughness down to 0. This looks bad! Grumpa is out of the fight and Mira the player is now forced to make a Death Test each turn to see if Grumpa succumbs to her wounds. The turn after Grumpa was brought down Mira rolls a 3, and so the ogre remains at death's threshold. Mira rolls a 13 in turn two, so Grumpa is one step closer to death. Two more rolls like that and she is gone.*

DEAD PLAYER CHARACTERS

Dead player characters may not remain in the game, but the player who creates a new character may do so using all the *Experience* accumulated by the last

Death test (1D20)

1
The character's damage looked much worse than it actually was; the character wakes up with 1D4 *Toughness* left. The character can act the next turn.

2–10
The character remains at death's threshold.

11–19
The character is a step closer to death. The third time the roll has this outcome, the character dies.

20
The character dies, but may say some last harsh words if the player wants to.

character. This way, the new character does not have to start too far behind the others.

HEALING WOUNDS

Healing can happen naturally, by the use of alchemy and medicine or with the help of mystical powers. Performing first aid on a dying person requires the *Medicus* ability, an herbal cure or powers of healing.

- Natural healing happens at a rate of one (1) point of *Toughness* per day.
- Alchemical herbal cures heal one (1) point of *Toughness* immediately.
- The *Medicus* ability heals 1D4 *Toughness*, even more when combined with herbal cures.
- Mystical powers, such as *Lay on Hands*, and the *Recovery* ability both heal *Toughness*; see their respective descriptions for details.

Special Actions

THE CONDITIONS of the combat situation and the weapons of the combatants will affect the course of events. Special rules for line of sight, the use of shields as well as different kinds of advantages are covered in this section.

BLIND FIGHTING

To fight blinded is hard, and the same goes for fighting under bad lighting conditions such as in darkness, smoke or thick fog. If both parties in a battle are affected, then no adjustments are needed. Otherwise, the affected party gets two chances to fail its success tests – if the character is affected, the player rolls twice and picks the worst result; if only the enemy is affected the player rolls twice and picks the best result.

DISENGAGE FROM MELEE COMBAT

Disengaging from a melee combat is done on the character's Initiative and costs a Movement Action. The enemy is allowed a Free Attack against the character. This also applies to situations when the character is facing multiple opponents, in which case each opponent is allowed a Free Attack against the character when he or she chooses to disengage.

USE/APPLY ELIXIR

To use or apply an elixir on either yourself or your equipment counts as a Movement Action. To use or apply it on somebody else counts as a Combat Action.

FIRST AID

To perform first aid on a wounded person counts as a Combat Action and requires a herbal cure, the *Medicus* ability or other healing powers. The effect of first aid is described in Damage & Healing.

STAND UP

Fighting while lying down is possible, but not recommended, because each enemy that has engaged the character in close combat gets an Advantage against a prone character. See rules for Advantage below. If the character makes a successful test against *Quick* it only takes a Movement Action for the character to get back on its feet. Otherwise, it takes an entire turn, meaning that the character cannot perform a Combat Action while getting up.

LINE OF SIGHT

Ranged weapons cannot shoot past other combatants, meaning that the shooter (or the mystic) may need to use Movement Actions to maneuver for them to have line of sight. A rule of thumb is that if a shooter or a mystic stands behind an ally so that the targeted enemy is forced to trigger a Free Attack to reach the shooter, then the target is obscured from view by the shooter's ally.

SHIELD

Anyone can defend themselves with a shield, providing +1 to *Defense*.

The use of a shield makes it impossible to use ranged and Heavy weapons and neutralizes the reach advantage gained from a Long weapon, since the wielder must use it in one hand. The buckler is an exception to this, allowing the use of both hands, as well as giving the user +1 to *Defense*.

FLANKING

To surround the enemy is an effective combat strategy. If two persons flank an enemy, both of them gain an Advantage against the target. A maximum of four persons can surround a person or creature; any combatant beyond that will be unable to reach the target and can only step forward if one of its allies retreats or goes down.

Terrain and the movement of the combatant decide what is possible to achieve. Doors, corridors and narrow passages can be used to prevent enemies from flanking.

Remember that attempting to move past an enemy triggers a Free Attack. The Free Attack can be avoided if the combatant opts to trade its Combat Action that turn for an additional Movement Action, making it possible to go around the enemy without entering into melee.

Abilities & Special Actions

Note that there are many abilities that affect the character's capacity to perform Special Actions. For example, an adept in *Acrobatics* can get up from lying down as a Free Action, provided that he or she succeeds with a *Quick* test. And the master level of *Sixth Sense* removes any negative modifications from *Blind Fighting* – which can be used when attacking opponents in the dark.

Combat Map

It can help to have a map of the battlefield in order to get a better overview of the combat situation. Draw the surrounding area on a piece of paper and mark where everybody stands with an "X" or simple markers or tokens. Even objects and terrain – such as trees, boulders and buildings – should be drawn on the map. Then it quickly becomes much more obvious where the combatants stand, who can shoot, who is flanked and so on. A combat map is even more recommended for battles with many combatants, such as in combat situations where the characters face the same number of enemies as themselves.

SURPRISED

To sneak up on an enemy or prepare an ambush is an active Action and requires a successful *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test. Attacking an enemy that is unaware of the incoming attack allows the attacker to make a Free Attack in the first turn of combat. Then the combat follows the usual turn order, based on the combatants *Quick*.

ADVANTAGE

Sometimes one side of a melee combat gets an advantage over the other. A character sneaking up on an enemy to attack it from behind has the Advantage. Another situation where you are at an Advantage is when you attack a target lying on the ground or a target that is climbing towards you. To create advantages when fighting on plain and even ground requires the use of Actions, attacks or movements.

If your character has the Advantage in a combat situation, it receives a +2 modification to the relevant Attribute when making a Success test, and its attacks deal 1D4 extra damage.

The following situations provide advantages:

- Attacking an enemy that is unaware of the pending attack. For this situation to occur, a successful *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test is normally required by the attacker.
- All melee attacks against a flanked enemy counts as providing an Advantage. A target is considered flanked if two enemies stand on opposite sides of it. It usually takes a Movement Action to get around an enemy and flank it. In the same way a character can use a Movement Action to get away from a flanked position – but with the consequence of receiving a Free Attack from each enemy.
- All melee attacks against an enemy lying down. Note that ranged attacks do not get any advantage from this.
- All attacks against enemies standing on lower ground than the attacker, such as attacking down from a wall against enemies climbing a ladder. This applies to both melee and ranged attacks.

Other Important Rules

THE GAME MASTER handles most things regarding problem-solving and social challenges, but here follows a description of the basic idea of how those situations are dealt with. This section also describes how to develop your character. These improvements are made using *Experience*, which is a reward gained from partaking in and surviving adventures. The Game Master awards the *Experience*, while the player uses it to improve his or her character.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Problem-solving refers to situations where your character attempts to achieve something that requires dice rolls and Success tests, but which is not a combat-situation: tracking a fleeing enemy, picking a lock, persuading a guard to let you in or researching the answer to a riddle in a library. The Game Master handles most of this; as a player you only have to be ready to describe how your character attempts to solve the problem, and then roll the dice to make the test asked for by the Game Master.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Social challenges consist of important negotiations, often involving the great and powerful personas, groups and monsters of the game world – situations that are unfit for combat and cannot be solved with a mere *Persuasive* test. In short, the social challenge is solved by your and your friends' roleplaying, where you will have to persuade, deceive and bargain your way to a solution. The Game Master handles the parameters for the social challenge, while you portray your character and together with your fellow players try to carry through a successful negotiation around the gaming table.

Social challenges are often preceded by scenes of problem-solving, where the character gathers information, secrets and rumors that can be used against the one they need to persuade.

IMPROVING YOUR CHARACTER

Experience is awarded by the Game Master after a completed adventure. *Experience* is traded in for higher levels in the character's abilities, or used to purchase new ones. Purchasing a new ability at novice level costs 10 *Experience*, to increase from novice to the adept level costs 20 *Experience* and increasing from adept to master costs 30 *Experience*.

Example: *Grumpa the ogre survives her first adventure and is rewarded with 12 points of Experience. To purchase a new ability at novice level costs 10 Experience, but Mira decides to save her Experience: she already has five novice abilities and wants to increase one of them to adept level.*

After another adventure, Grumpa is awarded with an additional 9 points, to a total of 21 Experience. Mira increases one of her abilities to adept level (at a cost of 20 Experience) after which she only has one (1) point of Experience left.

Table 22: Quick Guide for Combat

This guide can be used to keep track of the different phases of a turn.

1 *Initiative*

The Initiative decides the turn order in combat, meaning the order in which the characters and enemies act.

A.	**Long weapons:** The Long weapon is allowed to make a Free Attack at first contact with one enemy that is not armed with a Long Weapon.
B.	**Surprised:** If there is any possibility of surprise, make a *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test to see if the target is caught off guard. The one that performs a successful surprise attack can make a Free Attack at the start of the turn against one surprised enemy.
C.	**Quick:** The combatant with the highest *Quick* starts to act when neither Long weapons nor surprise attacks are in play.
D.	**Vigilant:** If two or more combatants have the same *Quick*, then *Vigilant* is used as a tie breaker to determine the turn order (highest goes first).
E.	**1D20:** If two or more combatants also have the same *Vigilant*, roll 1D20 until one of them rolls higher than the other, and therefore wins the Initiative.
F.	**Delay Action:** It is possible to delay one's Initiative and let others act first, but then the combatant must keep this delayed Initiative for the rest of the battle.

2 *Move & Combat Actions*

Each combatant has two actions: one **Movement Action** and one **Combat Action.** These can be used as follows:

A.	**Movement Action**
I.	**Move into melee:** To move towards an enemy in order to attack. This gives an enemy with a Long weapon a Free Attack, but not if the attacker wields a Long weapon as well.
II.	**To flank an enemy** already engaged in melee with a combatant allied to the flanking person. This gives both flanking allies the Advantage against their enemy.
III.	**Move around an enemy:** A circular movement in order to reach another enemy combatant standing further away. This gives the bypassed enemy a Free Attack.
IV.	**Disengage from melee combat**: To withdraw from melee allows every engaged enemy combatant to perform a Free Attack.
V.	**Create free line of sight:** To Move in order to get an obscured enemy into your line of sight.
VI.	**Draw weapon**
VII.	**Switch weapons:** Sheath one weapon and draw another one.
VIII.	**Stand up** (requires a successful *Quick* test): Get back up on your feet after being knocked prone or otherwise falling down.
IX.	**Drink/apply elixir:** To apply an elixir to either yourself or your equipment.
B.	**Combat Action**
I.	**Attack:** An ordinary attack using a weapon.
II.	**Active Ability:** An attack with, or the use of, an active ability.
III.	**First aid:** To apply an herbal cure on a wounded or dying companion.
IV.	**Additional Movement Action:** Replace your Combat Action with another Movement Action.
V.	**Pass on elixir:** To use an elixir on an ally or its equipment.

3 *Defense*

A.	**Defense:** All attacks made during the turn can be met with *Defense* tests, where the effective defense value is based on *[Defense←Accurate]*. If the *Defense* test is successful, then the attack misses completely. Should the attack hit, proceed to Damage.

4 *Damage*

A.	**Weapon damage:** The damage dealt by the character is rolled by the player. Their enemies have fixed damage values, announced by the Game Master when a character suffers a hit.
B.	**Protection granted by Armor:** The Armor is subtracted from the weapon damage. The character's Armor is rolled by the player; the fixed value of the enemies' Armor is handled by the Game Master.
C.	**Actual damage:** The target suffers as much damage as *[Weapon's damage –Armor]*
D.	**Pain Threshold:** The attacker determines whether the actual damage is higher than the target's *Pain Threshold*; if so, the target is either knocked to the ground or the attacker is allowed to perform a Free Attack.
E.	**Death test:** Should the actual damage suffered be greater than the character's remaining *Toughness* the character is either incapacitated or dying. The player must make a Death Test each turn to see if the character survives or dies.

O YOU REMEMBER ALBERETOR, the way it was before the hordes of darkness poured out from the East? I do.

I remember the Bay of Beredoria, sparkling green. I remember the rich and murky gloom of the Felan Forest. And every time I close my eyes, I can summon the image of House Kohinoor's palace in Kandoria. So mark my words – to adventurous fortune-seekers, our new homeland is more than Alberetor ever was.

Surely, I understand the allure of the forest. Davokar has it all: the mystique, the excitement, layers upon layers of ancient secrets. There's wealth and riches to be salvaged, if not in the form of precious metals and artifacts, then in the form of valuable treasures of nature. Yet, to he who keeps an open mind our Queen's promised land has a lot more than that to offer. The rigid structures of Alberetor are shattered. Power, wealth and influence no longer have to be inherited or presented as gifts from the ones already in power. Ambria is full of conflict, problems and tension, merely waiting for the involvement of ambitious people. Therefore, I say it again: Davokar may be alluring, but in Ambria there are countless ways to reach the same goal, whether you seek wealth, knowledge or fame!

Truth declared by Grandmother Aledra, the Town Hall's Loft, Yndaros

BOOK 3:

GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

Introduction

WELCOME TO THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE. Simply put, the Game Master is the person who holds the game together; mainly by presenting the setting of Symbaroum to the players and having their characters face all sorts of dangers and challenges. The Game Master should take some time to learn the content of the Player's Guide as well, since he or she is expected to guide new players through the process of character creation, and teach them how to use the rules of the game. Furthermore, the Game Master is meant to manage the characters' opponents – enemies and monsters that in many cases are characterized by abilities and powers described in earlier chapters of this book.

THIS SECTION CONSISTS of six chapters, of which the first one provides an introduction to all the tasks a Game Master is responsible for. The next two chapters concerns the ruleset, one describing the rules handled by the Game Master and the other presenting rule elements more tied to the game world itself – such as travel and economic transactions in Ambria.

The fourth chapter offers tips and guidelines as to how Game Masters can create their own adventures, and the final two chapters deal with monsters and creatures: chapter five on a general level and chapter six containing the actual descriptions of individual abominations, beasts, and undead creatures.

Before the Session

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS that we at Free League Publishing have played roleplaying games, we have often returned to a number of principles that we consider to be signs of good game-mastering. From these principles you can derive a series of tasks that the Game Master has to handle. It is important that these are taken seriously, if the shared experience of the game is to turn out to be rewarding for everyone involved. It may seem like a daunting list, yet we think that trying to embrace as many of these as possible is well worth the effort.

Of course, as a Game Master, you are free to pick and choose from among the following ruminations, preferably after talking to your gaming group and coming to a conclusion as to which ones you will be using.

MAKING THE ADVENTURE YOUR OWN

If you, as a Game Master, run an adventure or an adventure setting written by someone else (by us at Free League, for example) it is important to read the manuscript from cover to cover, but even more important to read it pen-in-hand. Make a note if there are details that you want to expand or wish to develop further, things that you want

This transcript, collected from one of the columns of Haganor, is indisputably the most widely debated among Ambrian scholars. Does it really identify the location of Symbar, and if that is the case: to which location does it point, exactly?

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and remember from which roots this verdant beauty springs; even the richest crop feeds on decay, and never before has any harvest been as lush, or any soil as black, as the one in the shadowy halls of Davokar."

to remove or change – you are the one who knows your gaming group and their characters best, and the adventure should be rewarding for all of you. In the case of an official published adventure, you should always regard it as a collection of ideas and possible challenges. Work it through and make the adventure your own, for the sake of yourself and your players.

REVIEW THE LAST GAME SESSION

Consider what happened during the last game session and how it may affect future events, especially the upcoming session. Plan for these eventualities.

UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

Who tries to stop the characters from reaching their goals? What does the enemy want from the characters, or want to stop them from doing? How far is this enemy prepared to go in order to achieve its goals? What restrains the enemy? What external forces must the enemy take into consideration (other forces or authorities in the area)? What are the enemy's local strengths and weaknesses? Also, remember that even a powerful enemy cannot be everywhere at the same time.

PREPARE CHALLENGES

Prepare challenges that correspond to the goals of the player characters. Which obstacles stand in their way? What kind of creatures roam the area? What will the character's enemies do in order to stop them?

During the Session

ASK THE PLAYERS TO RECAPITULATE

Start your gaming session by awakening your players' (and their characters') memory. First of all, ask the players what happened the last time you met, but let them also explain what their characters have done since then and what they plan to do now. Correct your players if they remember incorrectly, and add details they have forgotten that might be important to the current gaming session.

SAY YES

Avoid saying no when the players show initiative. Instead, say yes and follow it up with a challenge. Let the players decide if the challenge is too dangerous, or if it is a risk worth taking.

Ruins from the days of Symbaroum can be found all over the region, this one on the northern slopes of the Titans, just east of Mergile.

UNPLEASANT SURPRISES

Expose the characters to unexpected and dangerous situations that they have not asked for. The setting of Symbaroum is perilous and often unjust: the characters are not supposed to be able to predict, estimate or avoid every challenge they face.

DESCRIBE THE WORLD

Describe to the players what their characters sense – what they see, how it smells, what they hear. Highlight contrasts, that which describes differences in the game world, since it is easier to picture "this" when compared or related to "that".

If necessary, you can also describe what a character is thinking; the character probably knows more about the game world than the player does, which makes it appropriate to say things like "you realize that...". Be sure to leave it to the players to do the actual feeling and reacting.

IMPERSONATE THE NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Give your non-player characters (NPCs) names and portray them with manners and personalities of their own, so that the players get to experience encounters to remember. Make the NPCs understandable by giving them reasonable motives. NPCs may seem crazy or comical, but to themselves, their actions are always motivated and perfectly sound.

DESCRIBE CONSEQUENCES

Use NPCs to mirror the actions of the player characters – whether they hate or love what the characters are doing, they should show it. These reactions can also be described at the end of the session in the form of a narrative, should it not be obvious already. The purpose of this is to make the players understand that their decisions during the game have repercussions, something which helps make the game world feel alive and gives it a touch of "reality".

SAVE THEM FROM TROUBLE

If you as a Game Master have placed the player characters in a tight spot, then you should also be prepared to save them from certain doom. Do not let them die; give them a chance to survive in captivity instead. Or let another group appear and save them at the last possible moment – afterwards demanding their help with something difficult and unpleasant, of course.

LEAVE "EVIL" UNEXPLAINED

The darkness lurking at the roots of Davokar is beyond human. Maybe the darkness hates all things living; maybe the darkness feeds off the life force of others; or maybe it simply regards all living beings as playthings. The allies of evil, its servants, those who transform into blight beasts and hunger for life can be described, and sometimes explained, but the source of the darkness is nigh unexplainable.

After the Session

REWARD THE PLAYERS

Award the characters with *Experience* for each scene they encounter, and also add other kinds of rewards: social rewards such as contacts, secrets, titles and new equipment or maybe even mystical artifacts.

THE CHARACTERS' PLANS

Ask the players to describe what their characters plan to do next, or, if an adventure has just been concluded, what they intend to do before their next journey starts. Such information is essential for the Game Master when planning the next session.

CONCLUDE THE SESSION

Write down details or key words describing what happened during the session, as well as thoughts and ideas that might be useful during future sessions.

Game Master's Rules

THE GAME MASTER manages the overall rules of the game, decides which actions require dice rolls and communicates this to the players. This chapter describes the specific responsibilities of the Game Master, but remember that the Game Master also needs to learn the rules presented in the Player's Guide.

THIS CHAPTER STARTS with the rules for problem-solving and social challenges, followed by a section that deals with the subject of combat. Then comes a section that provides rules for how to handle Shadows and Corruption, and a section presenting a list of optional rules that you and your gaming group can decide whether or not to use.

Problem-solving

PROBLEM-SOLVING ENCOMPASSES every situation where you have to roll a die and make a test to advance the story, but which is not a combat situation. It can be when a character is attempting to fast talk its way past a guard, tracking a blight beast in the wilderness or researching old secrets at a library. The rules of problem-solving cover three different kinds of problems: simple, graded and extended. The tests are often modified by an opponent's Attribute or a Difficulty Level decided by the Game Master, usually a number ranging from +5 (Very Easy) to –5 (Very Hard).

Every character is allowed to make a test in an attempt to solve the problem, with the exception of some graded problems, where higher levels of success may require the mastery of a certain ability.

SIMPLE PROBLEMS

Simple problems are challenges that require a successful *[Attribute –Difficulty Level]* test. The results can only be either a success or a failure, and abilities cannot affect the result.

Example: *The characters find a dead body in an alley in Yndaros. With the help of a successful Vigilant test, one of them manages to find a handkerchief with a monogram at the scene: a clue that will help them in the search for the murderer.*

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

Characters with abilities of the more learned, social or tactical sort will get advantages when solving graded problems. Abilities such as *Alchemy*, *Beast Lore* and *Medicus* may be required for the character to be able to gain the highest level of information. In the same way, *Dominate* and *Leadership* can provide extra information in social situations beyond what can be obtained with just a successful *Persuasive* test.

Example: *The characters have captured a brigand, and interrogate him for details regarding the brigands' camp. A successful [Persuasive←Resolute] test forces the brigand to reveal where the camp is located and how many sentries are posted around it. A character with the Dominate ability can use it to threaten the brigand, to make him divulge the routines of the guards, and also that the brigands are allied to a sorcerer whose acolytes are in the brigand camp as advisors to the brigand chief.*

EXTENDED PROBLEMS

Some problems require a series of successful rolls and tests in order for the best possible outcome to be achieved. All characters are allowed to attempt to solve an extended problem, where only one of them needs to succeed with each attempt in order to move on to the next. The character with the highest relevant value goes first, then the others follow.

Example: *The characters are tracking a blight beast in Thistle Hold. The Game Master rules that it requires three tests for the characters to track the monster to its lair. One successful test takes the characters to the right part of town, the second allows the characters to follow the tracks to the right street and with three successes in a row they immediately find the right house.*

Social Challenges

SOCIAL CHALLENGES are problems and situations where the players will have to roleplay their way out of trouble; tactics and rolling dice is not enough. Sure, a social challenge is often preceded by problem-solving or even combat, but during the challenge itself the players, portraying their characters, must convince someone or some faction to do as the player characters want.

APPROPRIATE SOCIAL CHALLENGES

It is inappropriate to solve important negotiations by making a couple of Persuasive tests; it will feel more rewarding if the players roleplay their way through such encounters.

Rituals

Mystic rituals are powerful problem-solving tools and it is important that they are used in a way that does them justice within the game. The Game Master must keep track of which rituals the characters have, and which they can gain access to through their allies.

A scene where a powerful person, creature or group must be convinced makes for an interesting social challenge. Meetings with less important persons can also be made into social challenges, if the outcome of the scene (profit from success, cost from failure) is of enough importance to the player characters.

THE GAME MASTER'S ROLE

In social challenges, the Game Master must decide what is at stake for the target of the player characters: what does the target have to win from doing as the player characters suggest? What does the target have to lose? What is the possible cost of deciding to do something else? For a situation to be a social challenge there has to be a real possibility for both success and failure on the player characters' part, even if the odds may lean one way or the other.

STATISTICS & SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Social challenges are not solved by rolling dice per se, but some elements of problem-solving are usually involved. By solving practical problems the characters can learn more about the situation, or about the person that they intend to talk to. This way they can gain information that might prove useful during the negotiations.

Another option is to use the social challenge as the last step in an extended problem: the characters must bribe, convince and trick a number of administrators, advisors and guards in order to get an audience with one of the Queen's dukes. This requires a series of tests, just like in an extended problem-solving situation. The game then turns into a social challenge when the characters finally stand in front of the duke or duchess.

EXPERIENCE

If the challenge is of enough importance – if it greatly affects the player characters' chances to achieve their goal by either success or failure – then it should reward them with a single (1) *Experience* point, even if no success tests were made.

Example of Social Challenges

... to make a baron release the player characters from captivity in exchange for them performing some dirty work for the baron.

... to convince a lindworm with delusions of grandeur that the player characters are too insignificant to be worth killing, and that it would be better to let them go so they can spread word of the serpent's frightfulness.

... to persuade a count into handing over the residency of a keep; the count must choose between letting the characters become vassals, install one of them as baron or to let the keep fall into ruin.

Combat

IN COMBAT, the Game Master manages all resistance and all opponents, and decides which abilities or traits the enemies are going to use. Even so, all rolls and tests are made by the players: the stats used by the Game Master (if any) work as modifications to the players' rolls when they make these tests.

Example: *The characters end up in a fight against a tainted beamon with Accurate 11 (which will give the character's roll a modification of –1). The Game Master doesn't roll any dice for the bear beast's attack; the players roll their Defense at –1 instead, thus modified by the bear's Accurate. The beamon's attack hits if the players fail the test, and misses if the outcome is a success.*

APPROPRIATE RESISTANCE

Each creature and being is described as posing a specific level of resistance: Weak, Ordinary, Challenging, Strong or Mighty. Each level of resistance is a guide to how dangerous the creature is, based on the number and level of abilities/traits that it has. Note that the monsters can be more or less dangerous to a specific group of player characters, depending on the composition of the group. Experienced players are going to put their abilities and powers to better use, and help each other in a way that makes them stronger together. As a Game Master, you will soon learn to adapt the resistance to your players so that the battles are kept exciting. For a balanced gaming group, with an even distribution of Warriors, Mystics and Rogues, the following often applies:

Weak Resistance: A fair challenge for one newly created player character. Two or three enemies at this level are dangerous for a single player character.

Ordinary Resistance: A dangerous opponent to a lone, newly created character. Appropriate resistance for two newly created player characters.

Challenging Resistance: A dangerous foe for one experienced player character. Appropriate resistance for two experienced player characters and a clear challenge for a group of newly created player characters.

Strong Resistance: Corresponds to a highly experienced player character; a challenge on its own against a group of experienced player characters.

Mighty Resistance: A far greater threat than any individual hero, and a deadly challenge on its own, even against a renowned group of skilled player characters.

MONSTROUS TRAITS

The monstrous traits (see page 198) are meant to be used by the Game Master's monsters against the player characters, which is why these traits are written from the monster's perspective, so that they indicate what the players must roll to resist or avoid the effect of the trait.

ABILITIES

The abilities described in the Player's Book are written from the player character's perspective, meaning that the player character is the one who acts and the enemy is the target. When the reverse happens, when the player character is the target instead, the Game Master simply reverses the Attributes of the Success test. If the ability or power states that "the effect is ongoing until the character fails a *[Cunning←Strong]* test", then the formula must be reversed: The effect is ongoing until the character succeeds at a *[Strong←Cunning]* test.

Example: *Grumpa the Ogre is attacked by an assassin armed with Choking Spores. The Player's Book is written from the perspective of the player characters, and states that Choking Spores (the Strangler ability at adept level) requires a [Cunning←Quick] test to have effect. Yet, in this case, it is the player character that has to defend, which means that the Attributes of the formula switch places. The Game Master informs Mira that she must make a [Quick←Cunning] test or suffer the effect of the spores.*

The Game Master also tells Mira that she has a –3 to her Success test since the assassin has Cunning 13 (–3). Grumpa has Quick 10, so Mira must roll a 7 or lower to resist the Choking Spores. Mira rolls her die: 8. The assassin's Choking Spores hit the ogre right in her face.

EFFECT DIE FOR OPPONENTS

Only player characters roll dice for the effects of abilities and powers, just like with the Success tests. Instead the Game Master uses a fixed numerical value for all non-player characters. That is why the effect value of non-player characters is written as, for instance, 4 and not 1D8. So, damage dealt by a non-player character is a fixed number, while the player character rolls for his or her Armor. Likewise, it is the player who rolls the die when a player characters deals damage, while the Armor of a non-player character consist of a set numerical value. If ever unclear, the fixed numerical value of a die is always half of its highest possible outcome.

Making tests for the enemy

Note that there are some situations in which the players are supposed to roll the tests of their enemies. In such cases they should hope to roll over, not under, the enemy's value – meaning a favorable outcome for the characters.

One example is the mystical power *Curse*. If being the targets of a curse, the characters must make a *Resolute* test for the hostile mystic each turn, and hope to roll over.

Combat for Beginners

A tip on how to create a balanced resistance for new player characters is to base it on the number of characters.

Four new player characters can face any of the following:

- Four Weak enemies
- One Ordinary enemy and two Weak
- Two Ordinary enemies
- One Challenging enemy

Table 23: The Shadows of Creatures

CREATURE	COLOR OF SHADOW
Creature of nature	Green, red and white, sometimes other bright prime colors.
Civilized creature	Gold, silver, copper, sometimes other metallic shades.
Corrupted creature	Black and purple is dominant amongst blight beasts and creatures close to being thoroughly corrupt, while less blight-stricken beings exhibit a slight change in their colors, like corroded copper, blackened silver, sickly green, red with streaks of rust or white with flakes of ashen grey.

Time within the game

SINCE THE ADVENTURES of a roleplaying game take place in our imagination, we need a way to simulate the passing of time, both to know how long different effects are active (such as the effects of elixirs or mystical powers), and to keep track of the movements and Actions of individual characters. Symbaroum uses the following divisions to clarify what is happening.

SCENES

Scenes form the basis of gameplay and can be compared to scenes in a movie: one location, a couple of characters and something important that happens (a challenge). The duration of many abilities and powers lasts for an entire scene.

Scenes can be started by both players and Game Masters – a Game Master may introduce the characters to a challenge and the players can have their characters perform actions which make the game world respond in a challenging way.

For a situation to count as a scene, it has to include a challenge and, hence, an element of risk or cost to the player characters. The game mechanic for *Experience* relies on the number of scenes a player character survives.

INTERLUDE

The interlude is a scene without a challenge. It is often an atmospheric scene, where the player characters discuss something important or plan for the future. It can also be a briefly described journey. Interludes differ from scenes in that they do not grant *Experience*. The reason for this is that they lack any challenge or risk for the player characters.

TURNS

When a battle starts, the scene is broken down into turns, where each player character and enemy can perform two Actions in an order decided by Initiative. A turn ends and another begins once everyone has taken their actions.

Shadow & Corruption

ALL BEINGS and objects in the world are surrounded by mystical shadows, whose appearance varies depending on the creature or object's relationship to the great and vast powers of the world. Most people are unaware of the existence of these shadows, and while many might have been told about them, only a few individuals can actually percieve them.

THE ROLE OF SHADOWS

The ongoing struggle between civilization's desire to tame the wilds, and the corruption born out of over-exploitation, is a fundamental theme in the game of Symbaroum. The primary purpose of the Shadows is to introduce the players to these great forces and the dynamic that exists between them.

Shadows have two main functions within the game. First, individuals with the *Witchsight* ability can see through deception and deceit by actively using this ability. Second, the Game Master can use this element to infuse the world with both life and soul, and to portray these grand and obvious conflicts in a more personal and spiritual way.

THE POWER OF CORRUPTION

Power corrupts, and in Symbaroum quite literally so. A fundamental principle in Symbaroum is that when nature is cultivated or violated it grows dark and vengeful – and strikes back! The darkness that comes alive in this way feeds off and can continue to infect its surroundings. Since Mystics bend and warp nature according to their will, they are constantly threatened by Corruption. And when looking at the ruleset, this principle is mirrored in the concept of Shadows and in creatures like abominations and the undead.

Corruption starts at zero (0) and grows as the character is tainted. A character is technically transformed into an abomination when its Corruption value exceeds its *Resolute* value. Yet, long before that, the character starts to show physical signs of its growing taint, in the form of Stigmas.

TEMPORARY CORRUPTION

Temporary Corruption is a momentary expression of the world's reluctance to be subdued and controlled. It fades away by itself at the end of the scene but is still dangerous, since it can push a character's Total Corruption up to its *Corruption Threshold* (Blight-marked), or up to double its *Corruption Threshold*, turning the character into a blight beast.

Actions that give temporary Corruption:

- Using a mystic power or ritual: 1D4 temporary Corruption
- Using tainted artifacts: varies, but mostly 1D4 temporary Corruption
- Damage from certain abominations
- The dark areas of Davokar: The darker areas of Davokar are dangerous; the corruption varies from 1D4 temporary Corruption each day to 1D6 temporary Corruption each hour. It is said that the corruption suffered within the darkest parts of the forest is permanent.

PERMANENT CORRUPTION

Permanent Corruption means a lasting alteration of the character's essence and inner being. When permanent Corruption reaches the character's *Corruption Threshold*, which is half its *Resolute* value rounded up, the character counts as Blight-marked and receives a permanent Stigma (see Table 24). The Stigma disappears if the permanent Corruption is reduced to below the *Corruption Threshold* again.

The character turns into an abomination if its Total Corruption (temporary+permanent) reaches or exceeds its *Resolute* value. Then the character cannot be saved in any way.

Permanent Corruption is suffered when:

- Binding an artifact to oneself to be able to use its powers: 1 Corruption (or *Experience*).
- Learning a mystic power or ritual: 1 permanent Corruption.
- A character's Total Corruption reaches the character's *Corruption Threshold* during a scene: 1D4 permanent Corruption.
- If a character's Total Corruption has already reached the *Corruption Threshold*, the character automatically suffers 1D4 permanent Corruption if it gains corruption during a scene.

Table 24: Marks of Corruption

EXAMPLES OF STIGMAS
A festering wound that does not heal
Discolored skin, blemishes and severe rashes
Boils in mouth and throat, that burst at inappropriate times
Fangs, or nails in the shape of claws or talons
A birthmark that with imagination may look like a dark rune or an evil symbol
Eyes that glitter in the dark
Eyes that actually blacken with anger, hunger or lust
A faint odor of decay follows the person, despite him or her looking healthy
Breath that stinks of sulfur
Veins that bulge black when experiencing anger or other strong emotions
Dark streaks in the blood, visible when the creature bleeds
Cold as a corpse or feverishly hot without any signs of sickness or disease
Speaks in a unknown evil-sounding language while sleeping
Degeneration of sight; relying on other senses instead, like smell and touch
Taste for cadavers, must feed on something rancid every day to avoid starvation
Taste for raw meat, must feed on fresh meat every day to avoid starvation
Thirst for warm blood, must drink warm blood every day to not be thirsty

CHANGE OF SHADOW

A creature's Shadow reflects its increasing level of Corruption, and the *Witchsight* ability or the *Holy Smoke* ritual can be used reveal this. Technically, a corrupted creature has two Shadows, one representing its base color and one representing the taint.

The base Shadow is decided by the formula *[Resolute –Corruption]*; if this value is higher than the total Corruption value, then the base Shadow is the strongest and brightest of the two. The Corruption becomes the strongest Shadow when it reaches or exceeds the creature's original Shadow. Should a creature's total Corruption reach or exceed its value in the *Resolute* Attribute the creature is thoroughly corrupted and turned into an abomination.

Table 25: Corruption

DEGREE OF TAINT	CORRUPTION	EFFECT
Blight-stricken	Total Corruption 1+	The corruption can be detected with the *Witchsight* ability and rituals like *Holy Smoke*. .
Blight-marked	*Corruption Threshold* (*Resolute*/2 rounded up) reached.	The character develops a physical Stigma. A Stigma triggered by temporary Corruption will heal and vanish after a day, while a permanent Stigma remains until permanent Corruption is reduced through rituals.
Abomination	*Resolute* reached..	The player character turns into an abomination and becomes a non-player character. No known ritual can save the character.

STIGMATIZATION

A Blight-marked character must choose a Stigma. Under the wrong circumstances, the Stigma can be discovered by people near the character, should the character fail a *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test.

Just like Corruption, stigmas come in two forms: temporary and permanent. A temporary stigma occurs when the character's Total Corruption, including temporary Corruption, reaches its *Corruption Threshold* and the permanent stigma when permanent Corruption alone reaches the *Corruption Threshold*.

The player chooses a stigma (see Table 25) that fits his or her character.

Special Rules

IN THIS SECTION, we have gathered a number of rules-related phenomena that do not quite fit under any of the headings above, but which nonetheless are central parts of the game rules.

CONFLICTS WITHIN THE GROUP

Symbaroum is made to facilitate cooperation between players, and between the players and the Game Master. The game is based on the premise that the player characters may have their disagreements, but will not start clawing at each other's throats. If this happens, then the spirit of the game is lost.

However, if it comes to combat between player characters, the Game Master should intervene and ask the players how they believe the situation can be solved. It may end in actual fighting, but those fights are best handled as a narration without any die rolls and with no casualties.

There can, on the other hand, emerge situations where the player characters have a fierce disagreement and when they can trick, or in some other way mislead, each other by using the rules. The active player in the situation is then nominated to make the test, while the other acts as resistance. A common situation would be when a player character attempts to trick, steal or place something on another player character. A *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test is then made, even though both players are, of course, aware of what is happening.

Example: *The players have taken a prisoner. One of the player characters – a human – wants to torture the prisoner for information. But Mira's character Grumpa steps in. The Game Master asks: "how should this end?" and the players agree that Grumpa the ogre easily shoves the smaller human aside.*

DAMAGE FROM POISON & ACID

Poison deals damage each turn, and is not affected by Armor once it has begun to take effect. Poison continues to deal damage until its duration ends, or until someone applies an antidote and makes a successful *Cunning* test.

Acid deals damage each turn it is active, but is reduced by any *Armor* the victim may carry. Removing acid from a body or armor requires that someone spends a Combat Action and makes a successful *Cunning* test (washes away the acid with either water, dirt or similar)..

DAMAGE FROM FALLING

A character that falls from a high altitude suffers damage equal to the number of meters fallen. A successful *Quick* roll allows the character to land better, or even manage to break the fall, effectively reducing the damage: subtract 3 meters from the fall.

Water or other soft substances provide some cushioning effect as well, subtracting another 5 meters from the fall. Armor protects as usual.

Example: *The player characters cross a rope bridge that collapses. The fall is 20 meters, but the bottom of the ravine is covered with thick moss and pools of water. The Game Master subtract 5 meters from the fall, which gives an effective fall of 15 meters. One of the characters has Armor 1D6; the player tests Quick and fails. The character therefore suffers 15 –1D6 points of damage. Had the Quick test been successful the damage would have been 12 –1D6 instead.*

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS INTERVENE

There are two ways to handle situations where non-player characters fight on the same side as the player characters:

1: Give them to a player and let him or her control the NPC(s) for the duration of the scene, or
2: handle them yourself, summarily.

The Game Master does not have to roll any dice in the latter case; he or she simply describes what the character does and what happens. The effect of their attacks can be estimated, just like how well they can withstand hits and so on. The important thing is to not play them actively, since the Game Master's attention should be directed towards the ongoing scene and the story in general.

Chief Monovar of Clan Zarek, mounted on one of the clan's two tame daraks, on his way to a meeting with Alesaro, Duke of New Berendoria.

Optional Rules

HERE FOLLOWS a number of alternative rules for those groups that wish to either develop or alter certain parts of the game. These optional rules are meant to work as modules that can be easily added to the basic game rules.

The following modules are available:

- Instant Kill
- Modifications for critical damage
- Monstrous traits for player characters
- Play as abomination
- Re-rolls for Experience
- Re-rolls for Corruption
- Perfect hits and fumbled *Defense*
- Life Goals
- Movement by scale
- Roll for Attribute Values
- Specific Experience
- The use of *Persuasive* between player characters

INSTANT KILL

Gaming groups that wish to feel the wings of death more clearly may use the rule for instant kill:

The rules for dying are used as usual, except when a character is brought down to 0 *Toughness* by an attack that deals damage which exceeds the character's *Pain Threshold*. Such a powerful attack kills the target strait away; all the player character can do is to mumble a couple of memorable last words.

MODIFICATIONS FOR CRITICAL DAMAGE

To some players, it might seem appropriate for severe wounds to affect the chance of succeeding with future success tests. For these groups, we recommend the following rule:

Whenever a creature suffers damage that surpasses its *Pain Threshold*, it is given a second chance

Luck & Skill

The rule "Re-roll for Experience" opens up a different style of play, where a player may choose to invest in a lucky character rather than a skilled one: possible examples are to play a child or a very young person, in which case abilities at high levels might feel inappropriate, while a large amount of luck is more fitting.

to fail all success tests till the end of the scene. A player character that is critically damaged rolls twice whenever it makes a test and picks the worst result (the higher number). If it is the enemy who is critically wounded, the player rolls twice and picks the better result (the lower number). The effect of the critical damage lasts until the creature recovers or is healed at least one (1) point of *Toughness*.

Note that this rule does not affect undead, since they have no *Pain Threshold* – technically, they become more powerful if this optional rule is used, since everybody else become more vulnerable.

MONSTROUS TRAITS FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS

If the gaming group and the Game Master agree, then a player character can either have a trait that is not usually found among its race, or lack a trait that is otherwise common for said race.

The most reasonable is that the balance of the group is kept in check by offering the same possibility to all players – and also that the trait can be explained in the player character's background: a barbarian may have giant blood in its veins (*Robust*) while an Ambrian character may have been born during a fateful eclipse (*Terrify*) and so on.

All monstrous traits cost like abilities at the corresponding level, and player characters should never have higher than level I unless there are some special circumstances or the group feels that it contributes to the campaign. Of course, these strange characteristics attract attention, and it is not unlikely that some people have a strong and clearly unhealthy interest in the player characters and their odd powers. "No blessing that does not bring with it a little curse" as they say in Davokar.

PLAY AS ABOMINATION

A player character that turns into an abomination may still be played, if the Game Master and the group agree. In some groups, this can be something that heightens the misery of the world in a good way, while others might see it as something that detracts from the finality of Corruption.

Occurring but less common perfect hits and fumbles

For those groups that want to have perfect hits and fumbles, but do not wish them to occur as frequently, we recommend that the player who rolls a 1 must make a second roll, and only manages to land a perfect hit if this second roll is successful as well. The same goes for the opposite: if a player rolls a 20, then he or she should roll again and does not really fumble unless that second test also fails. This lowers the occurrence of perfect hits and fumbles, but still has them as possible outcomes.

As a blight born, the player stops counting Corruption, which might be a big advantage. However, the player character also gains a number of very fanatical enemies, which the Game Master can use to make life much more difficult for the player characters. In an exciting way, of course.

RE-ROLL FOR EXPERIENCE

Sometimes, it all comes down to a single roll of the die – a critical attack, an important damage roll or the like. For some groups, it is more exciting to be able to re-roll such rolls – for a noticeable cost. The following mechanic can then be used:

All rolls can be re-rolled at the cost of one (1) point of *Experience*, which is permanently spent. Only one re-roll per Action is allowed. This rule increases the chance of survival for the player characters, which can be a good thing, especially if combined with the rules for instant kill and/or Perfect Hits and Fumbled *Defense* (see below).

In the latter case, the group must agree which rolls can be re-rolled by spending *Experience*, and which cannot. The group has to decide:

- Can you re-roll a Death Test? (Recommendation: No)
- Can you re-roll a fumbled *Defense*? (Recommendation: No)

RE-ROLL FOR CORRUPTION

Just like the possibility of re-rolling tests by spending *Experience*, a group can decide on a similar solution where re-rolls are paid for in Corruption.

This makes flirting with darkness relevant for everyone, since even non-Mystics without access to artifacts can be lured towards long-term perdition for short-term gains.

All rolls can be re-rolled for the cost of one (1) permanent Corruption. Only one re-roll is allowed for any single test.

PERFECT HITS & FUMBLED DEFENSE

Some groups appreciate the drama of the dice more than others, and those players can use this rule for perfect hits and fumbled *Defense* to spice things up a bit.

- Perfect Hit (1 on 1D20 when attacking): The player character deals +1D6 damage
- Fumbled Attack (20 on 1D20 when attacking): The enemy receives a Free Attack against the player character
- Perfect *Defense* (1 on 1D20 when rolling *Defense*): The player character receives a Free Attack against the attacking enemy.
- Fumbled *Defense* (20 on 1D20 when rolling *Defense*): The enemy deals +3 damage.

Iasogoi Brigo brought this text from the ruined city of Odaban. It is presumed to express a proverb, along the lines of: *"In complete darkness the spark of hope shines the brightest."*

LIFE GOALS

An option – or an expansion – to a player character's goals is the Life Goal. A Life Goal is a summary of the character's values, principles and personal moral code, more or less what the character thinks gives life, as well as death, meaning. If goals are what the character wishes to achieve, then the Life Goal is more a reflection of how the character thinks life is meant to be lived, and what the character is prepared to do to achieve its goals.

Life Goals are sometimes better suited for classical adventures than ordinary goals are, since these adventures are usually driven by a mission rather than by short term desires. With a Life Goal, the player can act according to the principles of the character during the mission and thereby enrich the gaming experience for everyone.

Life Goals can also be used in addition to personal goals and the common goals of the group. In such cases, these goals can create interesting complications and friction within the group. Everyone in the group might agree upon what they seek to achieve, but may disagree on how they should go about achieving it, what it might cost in terms of principles and the well-being of others.

The important thing about Life Goals is that they contribute to the game and the shared experience of the group: frictions within the group can be fun, while open conflicts and irreconcilable feuds can be tiresome. Therefore, plan Life Goals together within the group, and make sure that they open up an interesting, rather than a destructive or tedious, group dynamic.

A character's Life Goal may very well alter between adventures. It is likely that a character's adventurous life may come to change how the character perceives the world, as well as itself.

Examples of Life Goals can be:

The Way of Mercy: To spare an enemy that has surrendered or to forgive those who have done evil deeds is essential to everything that is good. Everyone deserves a second chance. The character of an individual is put to the test first when his or her principles collide with strong negative emotions like hate and lust for vengeance. The question is whether you prove to be a brutal beast, or a person with dignity and mercy in your heart.

Fame: We all shall die one day, and all that remain are our names and reputations. Even in life great deeds can give great advantages, and when you are dead your children will live on with your name, for better or for worse. Fame is actually the closest thing to immortality.

Might Makes Right: The law of life is simple: eat or be eaten. It is not about what is right, but rather what you can get away with. Some protect themselves with fancy words about principles and values in order to sleep at night, but when everything comes to a head, it is everyone for themselves. Of course, it may be beneficial to work together sometimes, but it is only useful as long as you are not held back by the mediocre.

The Salvation of the Simple Way: Life is simple, and only by giving up false dreams and imaginary needs can you realize this. To work when you are able, to eat when you are hungry and sleep when you are tired – that is all you really need. It is by walking the simple way that you can find true bliss.

The Bond of Family: Blood is everything and more important than any other loyalties. You can swear oaths here and there, but in the end it is only the binding bond of blood that means something. It does not matter whether you agree with your relatives, or even if they are good people. Family always comes first. If you cannot trust your own blood, then who can you trust?

Finesse: The way of least resistance is not your way. To act with style and finesse is more important than always succeeding. If you are not going to do something to perfection, then you better not do it at all. To trudge along on the grey treadmill of life is the same as dying a little bit each day. There is a finer way of existence, which enriches our life with both beauty and elegance, and it is to this spiritual elite you wish to belong.

The Imperative of Freedom: Individual freedom stands above everything else. Duty and oaths of allegiance are the coward's shield against life. To not meddle unasked in the affairs of others, and to act free from the pressure and opinions of others is the way to a better life – maybe a better world. To be able to say on your deathbed that you have lived free, and followed your heart, is more important than anything else.

The Law of Generosity: To share what you have is essential. The level of kindness within a society is measured by how it treats its weakest members, and the same goes for the actions of individuals: are you a good person or nothing but a little bug? If you live in abundance, then share it with others.

The Compulsion of Revenge: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – that is the law of nature. All other laws are false, confused or morally weak. If you do not avenge any trespasses made against you, then who are you, really? All that remains then are empty words. Only actions count.

The Light of Knowledge: To understand existence is the meaning of life. Knowledge is meant to be revered, gathered, spread and developed. It is easy for life to become a simple acceptance of

everyday things, and a slave-like following of lust, duty and prejudice. To go to bed wiser than you woke up in the morning, just like knowing that, at the end of your life, you have carried the light of knowledge further into the dark – that is truly a meaningful lifework.

The Power of a Promise: To stand by your word and to keep promises made, that is crucial for the quality of a person. Reliability is all that matters. When you lie cold in your grave, what will people say about you? Were you a person to be trusted and relied upon, or just someone who said what others wanted to hear for the sake of your own benefit?

The Sanctity of Nature: Nature is the basis of everything and is to be handled gently. Do not take more than you need and be sure to give back when you can. To see yourself as separated from nature, like others do, is not only blind, but dangerous. Nature must be defended against those who seek to exploit it out of egoism and stupidity.

The Necessity of Order: Laws and rules exist for a reason and are meant to be obeyed. Rules might sometimes appear to be an obstacle, but that is only temporary. Over time, law and order are the sole salvation from chaos, for you and your descendants.

Duty Above All Else: The oath you have sworn is the most important thing in life. Not even if the authorities prove to be false or riddled with flaws can you break your promise. The trouble with the world is that so few stand by their oath, that so many forget their duty. Without a sense of duty a person is merely a slave to its own lust and vanity, while a kept oath will echo through eternity.

The Refinement of Wealth: Many struggle in vain seeking glory, fame and principles, when the only thing that actually lasts is right in front of them: wealth is what endures – to own land and gold. Other concrete things of value, such as businesses, real estate and the like are also important, since they are monuments to the greatness of their maker. Whether it is meant to be used in this life, or to build for future generations, wealth is what drives the world forward and gives a sliver of meaning to a measly life.

Ranged weapons and Movement by Scale

If Movement by Scale is used, then the battlefield should be given different qualities and almost be a character on its own. Sinkholes and ravines reduce maneuverability without obscuring the line of sight, which is to the shooter's advantage. Terrain with trees or broken columns can be varied by areas with lots of protection in the form of ruins. This, in combinations with varied opponents, allows every battle to be a unique tactical challenge.

MOVEMENT BY SCALE

In Symbaroum, movement is an abstract thing; a movement is more of a meaningful Action rather than meant to symbolize a specific distance. Some groups may prefer a Move Action to be determined by scale, usable with miniatures on a grid or crosses on a checkered paper. If so, it is our recommendation that a Movement Action represents 5 squares (2 paces or 2 meters per square). Creatures that stand next to each other are engaged in melee combat, and ranged attacks are required if there are one or more squares between the combatants.

The advantages of Movement by Scale is that it is easy to see which characters are engaged in melee combat, who will get a Free Attack when someone passes by and who has an open line of sight. The disadvantages is that it takes more time to plan and may mean a small loss of dramatic effect, since exciting combat is transformed into more of a mathematical exercise.

ROLL FOR ATTRIBUTE VALUES

For groups that are more old-school, or of such an inclination, there is the option to roll dice to generate your Attribute values, rather than doing it by distributing points. The easiest way to go is to roll 2D6+3 eight times (one for each Attribute) and then place these numbers appropriately, according to the character you have in mind.

SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE

Experience can be rewarded more specifically, instead of using the standard model that allows players to spend their Experiences as they see fit.

Specific Experience means that the player can only spend *Experience* on abilities that were used during the adventure, or to buy new ones.

THE USE OF PERSUASIVE BETWEEN PLAYER CHARACTERS

The group has to decide whether it is allowed to use *[Persuasive←Resolute]* against other player characters. Some will think that social pressure is a fact within a small group, and therefore keep that option; other groups might think that this ruins the game, since it takes away some of the charm of roleplaying games: to be able to act freely in a fantasy world. Both sides are right. The standing recommendation is to let it vary, and only allow the use of *Persuasive* against other player characters in dramatically crucial situations. "Do not kill her" is dramatically interesting while "Give me your share of the treasure" is not. To have some guidelines for when it is appropriate and to have the right to veto from the player whose character is exposed to the attempt, is probably a feasible way to go.

Campaign Rules

THE CAMPAIGN RULES in this chapter provide tools to handle some specific phenomena in Ambria and Davokar – journeying in the game world, Ambria's monetary system and the ancient artifacts that the player characters can find in the ruins of Symbaroum.

Travel & Encounters

TRAVELS IN AMBRIA are extended affairs through monotonous open farmlands, while traveling in Davokar offers more excitement than most can endure – at least if you are lacking experience and fail to read the signs of danger in time.

The following section offers a deeper description of the three different types of terrain presented in Table 26: Ways of Travel & Time, accompanied by suggestions as to what kind of resistance and dangers the characters might face. These suggestions refer to creatures that are described more thoroughly in the chapter Monsters & Adversaries.

AMBRIA

The heartland of Ambria is cultivated and well protected, by the warriors of various nobles as well as by the Queen's own army. The borderlands – the mountains to the south and east, along with the territories at the edge of Davokar – are avoided by all who can travel by other routes. Not only do many forms of dangers emerge from both the forest and the mountain valleys; it is also said that the baronies of the borderlands are weaker and less trustworthy, so much so that their nobles sometimes act no better than your common robber baron.

Suggested encounters in the Ambrian border territories:

- **Human antagonists:** Clan Warrior (Village Warrior), Cultist (Follower, Leader), Brigand (Robber, Robber Chief), Treasure Hunter (Fortune-hunter, Plunderer), Witchhunter (Self-taught, Black Cloak)
- **Predators:** Mare cat
- **Reptiles:** Kanaran
- **Winged creatures:** Violing
- **Abominations:** Blight Born (Human)
- **Undead:** Frost Light, Dragouls

Table 26: Way of Travel & Time

WAY OF TRAVEL	THE PLAINS OF AMBRIA	LIGHT DAVOKAR	DARK DAVOKAR
Day's march	20 km	20 km	10 km
Forced march*	40 km	30 km	15 km
Death march**	60 km	40 km	20 km
Day's ride	40 km	30 km	10 km
Forced ride*	60 km	45 km	15 km
Death ride**	70 km	50 km	20 km

*Forced march/ride means that no natural healing will occur while traveling.
**Death march/ride involves an actual risk to one's life and wellbeing. All who travel at this speed suffer at least 1 point of Toughness each day, and must make a Strong test in order to not suffer an additional 1D6 points of damage. A roll with the outcome 20 means that the traveler has been mortally damaged in an accident during its journey.

BRIGHT DAVOKAR

In the lands of the barbarian clans, wild beasts hunt and hungry monsters stalk close to ruins and sinkholes. The elves make life difficult for wanderers and occasionally launch raids against outposts that they consider to be eyesores. However, it is the human predator that is the primary cause of concern close to the edge of the forest: ravaging clan warriors and bands of brigands, as well as jealous treasure-hunters, too lazy to challenge the ruins themselves but daring enough to lighten a returning colleague's load by the use of threats and weapons.

Suggested encounters in Bright Davokar:

- **Elves:** Spring Elf, Summer Elf (Early Summer Elf, Late Summer Elf)
- **Troll:** Rage Troll (Famished)
- **Human antagonists:** Clan Warrior (Village Warrior, Guard Warrior), Cultist (Follower, Leader), Brigand (Robber, Robber Chief), Ranger (Ranger, Ranger Captain) Treasure Hunter (Fortune-hunter, Plunderer), Witchhunter (Self-taught, Black Cloak).
- **Spiders:** Etterherd
- **Predators:** Mare cat, Baiagorn, Aboar
- **Reptiles:** Kanaran
- **Winged creatures:** Violing
- **Abominations:** Blight Born (Human, Elk)
- **Undead:** Frost Light, Dragouls, Necromage

DARK DAVOKAR

The dark parts of Davokar are largely unknown, but justly feared. Those beings and things of which returning treasure-hunters speak add to the fantasies, while more sober reports claim that a large number of blight-stricken beasts and human-hating horrors huddle in the primeval woods and ruins.

Suggested encounters in dark Davokar:

- **Elves:** Summer Elf (Early Summer Elf, Late Summer Elf), Autumn Elf
- **Troll:** Rage Troll (Famished, Group-living), Liege Troll, Arch Troll
- **Spiders:** Etterherd, Tricklesting
- **Predators:** Mare cat, Baiagorn, Aboar
- **Reptiles:** Kanaran, Lindworm
- **Winged creatures:** Violing, Dragonfly
- **Abominations:** Blight Born (Elk, Aboar), Primal Blight Beast
- **Undead:** Dragoul, Necromage, Cryptwalker

Money

Money
1 thaler
↓
10 shillings
↓
100 ortegs

THE ECONOMY of the world is largely localized and based on the trading of goods. Ambrian barons pay their dukes with armored warriors, and build their own fortunes thanks to the laboring of crofters and the fruits harvested from their lands. In Davokar and on the western plains, the village chieftains provide their clan chieftains with warriors, and it is the work of slaves that carries the economy of the households.

The use of coins has been known to the Ambrians since before they fled from Alberetor. With time the Ambrian economy has become regionally accepted, so that trade between Ambrians and barbarians can be made in thaler . An increasing number of vassals are also paying their liege lords in actual coin, which has allowed the lords to hire mercenaries. Even the Queen has a standing royal regiment of guards, paid in pure silver.

THALER, SHILLINGS & ORTEGS

The main currency is the thaler, which can be divided into shillings (10 for each thaler) and ortegs (100 for each thaler). Farmers rarely handle coins larger than a shilling, since most of their transactions are made through trade, using ortegs and shillings as change. The thaler is the coin of the merchants and then often in the form of a paper Writ of Debt rather than actual coins. The nobles' bailiffs count in thaler as well, but usually handle them in the form of days worked or goods. At the bottom of the Ambrian society the economy consists of favors, alms, beggar's bread and lonely ortegs.

WRIT OF DEBT

The establishment of the thaler has also spread the use of the Writ of Debt. Wealthy individuals can pen a Writ of Debt, wherein the person applies its seal and before witnesses promises that the carrier of this writ (the creditor) can withdraw money from any member of the debtor's family, alternately from a trading house or another institution which then demands the sum from the debtor's family.

BRIBES

Bribing is a common way to grease the wheels of Ambria. The size and value of a bribe depends on who is being bribed (income) and what kind of action or request the bribe is meant to pay for (in essence, the risk for the one being bribed).

Table 27: Bribes

LEVEL OF RISK	MEANING	SIZE OF BRIBE
Low	To do one's job faster	One tenth of the person's daily income. If this becomes less than an orteg, then the greasing is done with food or something similar.
Moderate	To break a rule	One day's income
High	To break a law	10–100 day's income, as well as a good chance to go unnoticed for the bribed person. Very few established persons commit crimes with a possible death sentence or exile just for money.

FUTURE SHARES

Future shares have evolved in Thistle Hold as a way to finance adventures into the depth of Davokar. The risks are sky-high, but may also yield exponentially greater returns. Future shares consist of a witnessed contract where investors pay coin to a high-risk enterprise with the promise of a return of money in proportion to the investment.

Example: *The characters need capital and choose to invest in future shares. Grafoldo, the baron of Erebus, is about to launch an expedition to the Arc of Beremegos. The Game Master tells the players that the adventure has a series of challenges: it is worth five times the money invested if all of these are overcome, while the characters will get their money back, more or less, if half of the challenges are solved. If fewer than that are solved, then everything is lost. The characters invest a thousand thaler and accompany the expedition into Davokar in order to protect their investment.*

SETTLEMENTS & EQUIPMENT

The characters will want to purchase equipment as they are out adventuring in the world. Different locations have different possibilities of satisfying their needs in that regard. The size of a settlement determines its supply of goods.

Single Item: The highest cost for a single object that can be purchased in the settlement. You can probably order more expensive objects to this place (depending on its communication with the surrounding world), but there will be an added transport time, there and back, and the price will be 50 percent higher than usual.

Number of items: The highest monetary value that can be used to purchase a specific object at the location. Divide this number by the cost of the item to calculate how many units of that product are available for purchase.

Table 28: Settlements & Equipment

SETTLEMENT	SINGLE ITEM	NUMBER OF ITEMS
Lonely farm	1 shilling	1 thaler
Solitary village	1 thaler	10 thaler
Ordinary village	3 thaler	30 thaler
Trade station	10 thaler	100 thaler
Ambrian town	50 thaler	500 thaler
Thistle Hold	100 thaler	1000 thaler
Yndaros	1000 thaler	10000 thaler

Example: *The player characters visit a solitary village and ask for Choking Spores (cost 2 thaler). The village wise man mumbles something about bad harvest – they do not have any to sell, as 1 thaler is the highest price available. The characters then ask for Waybread (cost 1 thaler) which brightens the old man's mood: he surely has that! The characters purchase his entire stock, which is 10 units (number of items 10 thaler/ single item 1 thaler = 10 units).*

Artifacts

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, Mystics have bound spirits and power to objects, and thus created what today are known as artifacts. Each artifact is an expression of the will of the bound power and no will is without consequence for he or she who tries to wield it. In other words, all artifacts are associated with risks – especially to users who are unaccustomed to wielding items that are charged with mystical energies. These days, crafting of artifacts is very rare, partially because so many rituals for making artifacts have been lost over the centuries. Also, binding powerful spirits has never been without risk, and never more so than in these dark days when The Eternal Night draws ever closer.

Finding an artifact can be the climax of an adventure and often the start of new one. Maybe it is also the first step down the slippery slope of Corruption.

TO ANALYZE ARTIFACTS

Both the *Witchsight* (a *Vigilant* test) and the *Loremaster* (a *Cunning* test) abilities can be used to understand an artifact, what powers it has and any risks that might come from being bound to it.

Of course, a character that becomes bound to an artifact will immediately become aware of its powers and disadvantages. However, once an artifact is bound to a player's character, it is too late for the player to change his or her mind: any possible negative effects of the binding will strike at the character mercilessly.

TO BIND ARTIFACTS

In order to use an artifact, a character must be bound to it. Once this is done, the player gets to know all of the artifact's abilities and disadvantages.

A character can bind an artifact to him- or herself at a cost of one (1) *Experience*. Another option is to suffer one (1) point of permanent Corruption.

TO USE ARTIFACTS

You are free to use an artifact once you have bound it to yourself. Exactly how this is done depends on the artifact, but the description of the item always follow this template:

Title: The name of the artifact.

Description: The artifact's history, legends and previous owners, as well as what is commonly known or believed regarding its powers.

Powers: How the power or powers of the artifact work. The artifact usually has a general power or ability that can be used by anyone who has bonded with it, and possibly other powers that require a certain ability in order to work.

Action: The kind of Action that is required to activate the artifact's power.

Corruption: The level of Corruption the wielder suffers when activating the power.

WATER OF THE DUSK

Water of the Dusk is an example of an artifact that the Game Master can use in any of his or her own adventures, and it is also possible for the Game Master to use it as inspiration when creating new mystical items. Water of the Dusk is said to have been created for the first time on a battlefield during The Great War, just before the hordes of the Dark Lords were about to swarm into Alberetor.

Today, Water of the Dusk is crafted at the summer Solstice by the most powerful theurgs in the service of Prios. When the last rays of the dying sun shine through the atrium of Templewall's mighty cathedral, they are captured in the tears of the holy Weepers, to be dripped into a crystal vial blessed for the purpose. Only one such vial is made each year and its powers contain the blessing and judgment of Prios, distilled to a handful of drops.

This light-bringing elixir is said to cure diseases, scare off blight beasts and – if the vial is shattered – purge an accursed place of its unholy energies. Naturally, Water of the Dusk cannot be purchased. Instead, it is always given to the most faithful servants of the Church prior to an important mission. However, the occasional vial may have been lost as some champions of the sun have fallen in battle.

The holy Water of the Dusk cannot be bound by accepting Corruption; it must be paid for in *Experience*. When this is done, characters that bind the water to themselves immediately suffer 1D4 points of damage for each point of permanent Corruption they have. Characters whose *Toughness* is brought down to 0 are immediately burned to a pile of ash – the rule for Death Tests does not apply! The ones who survive will find that all their permanent Corruption has been burnt away.

Characters with permanent Corruption may make a *[Vigilant –permanent Corruption]* test to realize that the Water will judge them harshly.

Water of the Dusk has the following powers:

The Light of the Sun: In the hands of one who has submitted to the light and bound itself to it, the vial can flare up with the power of the sun, so that the surroundings are bathed in light equal to a cloudless day with the sun high in the sky.

Action: Free

Corruption: None

Spontaneous Water of the Dusk

It is said that Water of the Dusk can appear spontaneously, but that it only happens during especially sacred conditions and that its effect in such cases remains active only for a short time. For instance, Prios is supposed to have blessed the water in a rippling brook by a rest stop in the Titans; a brook from which Queen Korinthia drank with cupped hands mere moments before she first laid eyes on Ambria bathing in evening mists lit by the last light of Prios. A small chapel has been built on that site.

Other rumors tell of a spring by the ruin of the sun temple east of Karvosti possessing the powers of the holy water – a clear sign that the Sun Knights were right to liberate the ruin from elves and witch worshipers – and about a frontier village on the shores of River Eanor where a well is said to have been blessed. A little boy jumped into the well to escape the blight beasts that attacked the colony; the blighted ones that jumped in after him were incinerated by the water and the boy was the only one to survive the slaughter.

Drops of the Sun: The vial contains 1D10 drops of holy water, which can be dripped on a sick or wounded person to cure him or her. Each drop has all of the effects below when dripped on a creature. When all the drops have been used, the vial is empty and the light of Prios is spent.

- Heal 1D10 points of *Toughness*
- Works as a moderate antidote.
- Purges one (1) point of permanent Corruption.
- Deals damage to the creature equal to its Corruption, if it has any.

Action: Active
Corruption: None

Holy Synergy: Someone who is bound to the Water of the Dusk can use its light to enhance the effect of theurgical powers. Such powers have their Effect Die increased by one step. The synergy can be performed once per scene.
Action: Reaction
Corruption: None

Justice of the Lightbringer: The one bound to the Water of the Dusk can break the vial with just a thought and unleash its judging light. All present creatures that have at least one (1) point of Corruption suffer damage equal to their total Corruption, while all creatures that belong to the Abomination monster category suffers 1D10+10 damage. Of course, this also affects the one who carries the vial.
Action: Free
Corruption: None

Shining Doom: If the one who carries the Water of the Dusk and is bound to it ever becomes blight-marked, then the vial will detonate with the same effect as Justice of the Lightbringer.

THE SERPENT STAFF OF OPADIA

The snake-headed rune staff that recently disappeared from the Thistle Hold chapter of Ordo Magica, is said to have belonged to Opadia, a now deceased Staff Mage – powerful Mystics that, according to legend, served as bodyguards to the last emperor of Symbaroum, and whose descendants are said to live hidden in an overgrown fortress somewhere in the dark parts of Davokar.

Opadia was acquainted with Lasifor Nightpitch and lived in Thistle Hold for a time when the town was young. She fell in battle against elven raiders and the staff was sold to Ordo Magica, from whom it now has disappeared.

Staff Bite: The one bound to the staff can let it make a poisonous bite when it hits an enemy in melee combat. The hit from the staff must deal damage in order for the poisonous bite to have effect. The poison is considered to be moderate and deals 1D6 points of damage for 1D6 turns.
Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D4

Biting Bonds: If the master of the staff is skilled in the *Polearm Mastery* ability the staff can perform a melee attack that hits a target automatically. The staff then slithers around the target and bites it again and again. The attacker must succeed with a *[Vigilant←Strong]* test each turn for the staff to maintain its grip.

The target may act as usual but suffers a bite attack each turn that deals 1D6 damage. If any damage penetrates the target's Armor the target is affected by the staff's poison as well, dealing 1D6 points of damage for 1D6 turns. The poison only affects the target once, but the staff itself continues to bite. If the target manages to break free, the staff lands on the ground, a rune staff once again.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D6

Staff mages – myth or reality?

The existence of the Staff mages is widely debated, despite a handful of reliable witnesses claiming to have met them. It seems almost impossible for capable explorers to endure the dangers deep inside Davokar; how then can an entire village, probably filled with both children and elderly, have survived there for centuries!?

Adventures

ADVENTURES ARE A FOUNDATION or basis for roleplaying sessions, and this chapter offers guidelines and tips that Game Masters can use as a starting point to either create their own adventures or to adapt published adventures to their gaming groups.

Adventures can be viewed and described in many different ways – we have chosen to present two of them: the Classic Adventure and the Adventure Landscape.

The Classic Adventure

CLASSIC ADVENTURES ARE characterized by having a well-defined beginning and an equally well-defined end, and are often divided into chapters in a way resembling the flow of a movie, from the start through rising tension and several turning points to the climax.

In a classic adventure, the Game Master has a vital role to play since the story is often set in motion by forces beyond the player characters, usually by some kind of quest giver. For a classic adventure to feel relevant to the players, it is important that the goals of their characters coincide with that of the adventure, or that the group gets closer to achieving its goals through the promised rewards of the quest.

The great advantage of the classic adventure is its simplicity: it is easy for both the players and the Game Master to be drawn into the game. The downside is that the players may experience that the more-or-less predetermined progress forces them to act in ways that can seem unwarranted to them. The latter can be avoided, or at least toned down, by wisely chosen incentives and if the adventure provides clear goals but leaves it to the players to determine how to reach them.

Here follows a recipe for creating a classic adventure, spiced with comments, variants and constructive suggestions.

THE INTRIGUE

For adventures in Symbaroum it is recommended that the GM uses a simple intrigue that leads to exciting and diverse stories depending on how the player characters handle its challenges. Advanced or complicated intrigues are discouraged; they can be very interesting for the Game Master to create, but difficult to convey to the players while playing.

The easiest way to start is, of course, by examining what the player characters hope to accomplish (the group's common goal) and then toss in enemies that want the exact opposite. If, for example, the player characters try to establish an outpost in

Campaign, Adventure & Session

In this book we refer to things called campaign, adventure and game session. The latter simply refers to a single game meeting where you and your friends get together for a shorter or a longer period of gaming. An adventure is a separate story on its own, with a clear beginning and end, that can last from one to several game sessions. Finally, the word campaign refers to a long series of adventures that are either connected or more or less independent from one another. To make the distinction between adventure and campaign even more evident, you can compare an adventure to a single book or an episode in a series, while the campaign represents the series as a whole.

Davokar, then the Game Master can build an adventure around a civilization-hating witch that tries to stop them by using a vengeful nature spirit, or around a war band of fiery spring elves that has allied themselves with the beasts to drive the player characters away.

THE MISSION

An easy start to an adventure is to have the player characters be contacted by someone who gives them a mission to accomplish. One or more clear rewards should be tied to this mission, rewards that can help the characters get closer to achieving their own goals. It is possible to strengthen the incentive (the motives of the characters) even more by having the adventure start in medias res (see page 195) or making sure that the characters have some quarrel with the adventure's main antagonist right from the start. No matter how you do it, the important thing is that the mission is engaging for both the players and their characters.

THE ANTAGONISTS

The enemies, or the antagonists, are usually known from the beginning, or at least clearly defined; the player characters wish to accomplish something that either another person or another group does not want to happen. Or maybe the opposite: an organization or group tries to accomplish something that the characters (maybe in the name of their employer) want to prevent from happening.

The Game Master can start with an enemy faction and then stick with them through the adventure: weak enemies commanded by a more competent leader in the beginning of the adventure, and then posing increasingly bigger threats as the adventure moves forward.

OTHER AGENTS

Maybe there are potential allies that the player characters can seek out? Allies are often made by the principle of "my enemy's enemy is my friend"; maybe the antagonist has an enemy that the characters can try to reach and recruit to help them, even if the characters and said enemy's enemy normally would not work together.

ENVIRONMENTS

In classic adventures, antagonists and environment are closely connected. You find the enemy in a specific location; very traditionally – but in no way wrongly – the final battle usually takes place at the enemy's stronghold. Typical adventure environments within the game world of Symbaroum are the alleys and sewers of the city, the gloomy dark of Davokar and the ruins of the forest.

Landscapes

A LANDSCAPE CONSTITUTES a location or a region with a large number of agents and intrigues, where the player characters end up and are forced into action, guided by their goals and principles. The landscape does not have a predestined story or plot associated with it; instead, scenes arise when the players act or react to challenges presented by the game environment.

This model is sometimes called a "sandbox", to emphasize that the players, through their characters, may try to build what they want and solve any problems that might emerge, by using whatever tools are available at that location.

It is the goal of the group that creates missions and incentive. The Game Master can place smaller problems or missions between the characters and their long-term goals, as long as the rewards of these missions point towards the goals of the characters. Such complications can turn a relatively straightforward goal into an entire campaign.

The benefits of a landscape are that it is the goals of the player characters that drive them forward, and that the story becomes their own unique one.

The disadvantage (if considered as such) is that this model demands a higher level of commitment, both from the players and the Game Master – for the players because the characters' goal needs to be more developed and have relevance to the landscape; for the Game Master since all local groups have to be managed and understood when the progress of events completely depends on the actions of the player characters.

FRIENDS & FOES

In an adventure landscape, it is less obvious who will become the enemy and antagonist of the player characters, since it is often the characters decisions that dictates who they will gain as an ally and who will be their enemy. The local power struggle can be crucial to what happens when the characters arrive and start to stir things up.

The Game Master would do well to decide (or in the case of published adventures, read up on) the local power factions: what they seek to accomplish, both in the short and long run, as well as what resources they have at hand. Knowing such details is absolutely vital when managing the landscape.

Key Scenes

EACH ADVENTURE – classical or landscape – usually contains the following Key Scenes in order to guide the story from beginning to end. The course of the classical adventure is more predictable, while scenes in a landscape are created by the initiative and ideas of the player characters. However, when the dust finally settles over the landscape, these scenes have usually been played out, which is why a wise Game Master always makes sure to prepare for that eventuality.

THE BEGINNING

The beginning of an adventure can be the offering of a quest/mission or some other event that sets things in motion and makes the players start acting towards their goals. The goal can be connected to the mission's promised reward, or have been expressed by the group long before. One safe bet is to make short-term survival the goal of the player characters, by throwing an unexpected challenge at them, a technique called "in medias res". If done right, the players will give themselves a mission as a result of the challenge.

The Game Master should consider whether the main mission of the adventure is positively motivated (the characters gain something they want by doing it) or negatively motivated (the characters avoid something they do not want by accomplishing the mission). Positive incentives tend to be most appreciated by gamers, followed by a combination of carrot (reward) and stick (something that the characters want to avoid at all costs).

Positive incentives include:

- Reward connected to the goal of a character – knowledge, an object or other resources that the character needs.
- Reward connected to the goal of the group – knowledge, an object or other resources that the group needs.
- A call for help from an ally, with a promise of a favor in return at a later date.

It is possible to create fun and effective survival adventures, despite that they are by nature driven by negative incentives ("survive, if you can..."). The key is that the player characters are forced by the environment, not by a specific person or group. It is even better if the characters can continue to strive toward their goals, but the negative incentive makes it more complicated by introducing time pressure, difficult moral choices or something like that (*"we can return home, but we must first get past the quarantine around this plague-stricken city: how do we get out with these twenty-two crates of supplies?"*)

Examples of negative incentives can be:

Caught in a siege: the characters are stuck in a city under siege and have to complete their missions in the city before the walls fall and enemy forces come pouring in.

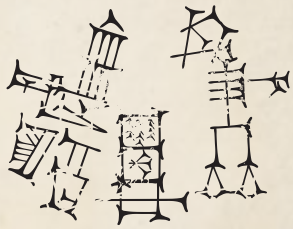
Marked for death by an organization: the characters realize (maybe through an attack) that they are marked for death by an organization. Maybe it is obvious to the characters why this is happening, or maybe the reason behind the attacks is a mystery on its own? Either way, the mark of death must be lifted in order for the characters to accomplish their goals in their current location.

Falsely accused: the characters are falsely accused of a crime in a location where they need to be able to act in the open. *"Who has accused us/fabricated the evidence and why?"* become questions that have to be answered, at the same time as the characters have to move in the shadowy side of society, constantly afraid to be sold out by its less trustworthy elements.

The threat of war: a war is about to break out and it will most probably destroy something that the characters hold dear. The characters must do anything they can to prevent the war, in one way or another. Perhaps by forming an alliance strong enough to deter any attacks, or perhaps they can take out the enemy's leadership.

Quarantine after plague outbreak: the characters find themselves stuck on the wrong side of a quarantine zone and have to escape or cure the disease, while they also have another task to perform at the same location.

Demand for help: the characters are more or less forced to help their mother organization or another group that they depend on, something that proves to be problematic and also contradictory to their own



Writing discovered on a demolished bridgehead along the River Eanor. Playful scrawl to some, the story of a peace negotiation that took place on the bridge according to others.

A Combination of Classic Adventure and Adventure Landscape

Practically, adventures often turn into a mix of classic and landscape, containing some parts that are driven by the Game Master and some where the players take over and act. An adventure might start with the Game Master tossing the characters into a dangerous and unexpected situation, "you awaken to the village being under attack", and then it is the players' job to get out of the situation by any means necessary. Or, the group might decide to accomplish a common goal, "we are going to establish a base in Davokar for further treasure hunting operations in the ruins of Symbaroum", and the Game Master presents a series of challenges that the characters have to solve in order to accomplish their goal.

local goals. The question is how – or even if – they can solve their own tasks while at the same time making the group/organization satisfied?

CONFRONTATION

Before the adventure's Turning Point, the characters usually confront the antagonists twice. A proven model is to start with a simple meeting, to establish the antagonism, and then a second, more serious one to emphasize that the enemy poses a significant threat. An often used dramatic method is making the enemy superior the second time, forcing the characters to flee a battle in which winning is the same as getting away.

TURNING POINT

The characters discover a way to break the dominance of the enemy or at least find a way to strike at its heart, against their leaders or stronghold. Perhaps they defeat an enemy that carries secret documents or they manage to find a lost ritual in a crumbling library that can temporarily weaken the enemy's forces so that their leadership can be attacked.

The Turning Point is the moment when the player characters reclaim the initiative and are given an ace to play. From the Turning Point on, the characters know what to do, although it may neither be easy nor safe to do it.

CLIMAX

The insight of the Turning Point is tested against a cruel world in the final stage of the adventure. The Climax usually occurs when the main antagonist is confronted and forced against the wall in a tremendous final battle.

Challenges

CHALLENGES COMPRISE ANYTHING that the characters must overcome in order to accomplish their goals. Handling these challenges is one of the Game Master's main jobs. One fundamental rule is that none of the characters' goals should be achievable without passing at least one challenge – preferably there should be several challenges stacked against the characters, standing between them and their goals. The group's common goals are suitable as the goal for an adventure or a campaign, since those goals are shared by the whole group. Personal goals, pursued by one individual player character, should have fewer challenges tied to them, since they do not concern the entire group and can feel boring to the other players should they drag on for too long.

Below is a list of possible challenges that the Game Master can use to make life interesting for the characters on their way toward their goals.

The characters face an obstacle on their way:

- Escape captivity
- Survive an ambush
- Get out of a surrounded or besieged location
- Overcome a lock or a trap

They need information from someone, and that person requests help:

- Defend a location against an attack
- Track down a fleeing person or creature
- Steal an item
- Win a duel

They need help from a person, but first they have to get hold of said person:

- Capture a possessed person alive and banish the spirit
- Break into a prison or let themselves be captured
- Track down a fleeing person or creature
- Get inside a surrounded or besieged location

They have to gain access to a specific location for a short or long period of time:

- Defend a location from enemies
- Partake in a play or a gladiatorial fight
- Overcome a lock or a trap
- Sneak past or fight the guards

They must choose between different goals:

- Hand over a murderer to the authorities to face justice – or ask the murderer for help
- Destroy a corrupted artifact that causes suffering – or use it to defeat an enemy

Rewards

THE GAME IS FUELED by rewards, and a balanced dose and assortment of rewards will keep the players interested for a long time. Rewards consist of both concrete items that are visible on the character sheet, as well as more socially relevant phenomena that are reflected in the shared game world. The players also reward each other – and the Game Master – by reacting to what is happening and by taking initiatives that enriche the social interaction.

In this section, we provide some guidelines on a number of things that are controlled by the Game Master and can be used to reward the players (and their characters) after an adventure.

DIRECT REWARDS

Direct rewards cover all tangible effects of being successful in the scenes of the game: meaning *Experience* and looted goods.

Experience: Each challenge in an adventure awards one (1) point of *Experience* that can be spent on improving or aquiring abilities, forming the basis of the character's progress in strength and skill.

Looted goods: It is only fair that the weapons, armor, equipment and money of fallen and captured enemies become the property of the characters – should they choose to take these items and have the means to transport them. The value of these items is half the usual price, which makes it more worthwhile for the characters to use the captured items themselves, rather than selling them.

SOCIAL REWARDS

Social rewards consist of everything that the players give each other around the gaming table, and what the Game Master gives the players either at the table or within the game world. The importance of social rewards is not to be underestimated; the reason why many people play roleplaying games at all, in an age with well-developed online games, can be found in social interaction and the ancient pleasure of telling stories together.

Favors: A favor that solves a challenge gives the characters *Experience* as if they solved the problem themselves. Exactly what a favor can solve is, of course, decided by who owes the characters a favor. Appropriate favors can be access to a location or to a person of high standing and influence, as well as the casting of rituals or the use of abilities that the characters need, but do not have themselves.

Dark secrets: A dark secret consists of sensitive information that the characters can use against someone in order to accomplish something. The person will not appreciate the blackmailing, but will help the characters within reasonable limits. Secrets are a double-edged weapon in the hands of greedy player characters; most persons who are blackmailed will attempt to have the characters removed rather than letting the blackmail continue. But if handled correctly, a dark secret can be a potent weapon in the characters' hands.

Titles: In feudal societies titles are desirable because they provide status; for players, recognition in the form of titles is often appreciated even if the title itself does not mean anything more than that people respond to the player's character differently. See the chapter Factions (starting on page 24) for titles in different organizations and groups.

Estates: Titles are sometimes, but far from always, accompanied by the rights to pieces of land, which is hard currency in the game world. Exactly what the land gives the characters – besides the burdensome duties of being a liege lord – is up to the Game Master to decide, but there are two ways this can be handled. The first is to handle the estate during interludes and letting it produce a small profit for the characters. The second way is to make the land a central part of the campaign, and to make the adventures come there, rather than having the characters travel in order to find them. This way, the estate and its population can become recurring features in many stories.

Reputation, songs and statues: Social reinforcement from the game world in the form of improved reputation for the characters, songs about their heroic deeds or perhaps statues raised in their honor, are appreciated acknowledgements that bring flavor to the game world in more ways than one. The players get to feel as if their actions actually had an impact on the game world, and it becomes even clearer when future generations of characters come to a village where the local sun temple houses a statue of the village hero, or when the bard in the tavern sings a celebratory song about the hardships and adventures of a previous player character.

MATERIAL REWARDS

Material rewards consist of all the concrete rewards that the character gets as a result of adventuring; as payment for an accomplished mission, in the form of treasures found in the ruins of Symbaroum or as gifts from allies as thanks for any heroic deeds that the characters have performed.

Adventures in the World of Symbaroum

There are a large number of persons, locations and conflicts described in the first section of this book that can be used to create numerous adventures. As a creator of such adventures, you are of course welcome to use anything and anyone you like, but we would like to urge some caution. If you and your group intend to play the adventures created by us at Free League Publishing, you can be sure that some things described in this book will show up in them (for example locations like Saroklaw and Symbar, and persons like Nightpitch, Queen Korinthia and First Father Jeseebegai).

If you have used them already, or maybe even killed a prominent person, then you may of course alter the content of our adventures to something of your own making (if the Huldra Yeleta has died, then she has of course been replaced by some other experienced witch). In other words, you must be prepared to make adjustments. Our recommendation is that you, in your homegrown adventures and campaigns, limit yourself to using less significant places and characters.

Mystical artifacts: Mystical artifacts are the highlight in every treasure-hunter's career and many players dream of powerful weapons for their characters. An excess of artifacts will deprive them of their magic for the players and make the game hard to balance for the Game Master. Artifacts in the campaign should be kept manageably low in number so those that do exist shine all the brighter.

Money: Money is a simple reward and not to be despised, especially if the group has a common project that devours resources. However, to pour loads of money on the players is not a very good thing to do, since there are not that many directly personal things for them to buy. When all their equipment is of extraordinary quality and their backpacks are full of alchemical master concoctions, then money is no longer needed, unless the character has a larger project going on (a headquarters, for example, debts or their own military force that they have to maintain).

PLAYER TYPES & REWARDS

It is worth the time to contemplate why the members of your gaming group play roleplaying games. Each player needs to get some of his or her "medicine" at each session, or else interest in the game will fade. Of course, the same goes for the Game Master, and many player motivations echo within a Game Master. Here is a list of common types of players.

The Action Hero: The Action Hero plays for the excitement, which is usually found in combat. The player seeks power and possibilities to affect the game world and enjoys seeing his or her actions have effect in the world – or on the character sheet. Appreciated rewards: Action scenes; equipment that makes the character tougher in battle.

The Problem Solver: This player wants to feel smart and to solve problems, like tactical problems in challenging battles or solving riddles and tricky intrigues in the game world. The Problem Solver often becomes restless if no problem is presented, or if the problems are too easily solved. Appreciated rewards: Problems to solve; rituals and artifacts that make them better at solving problems.

The Social Player: For the Social Player, the camaraderie and the shared story are the most central aspects of the game, and a good atmosphere is often considered more important than being successful in the actual game. Appreciated rewards: Social challenges and scenes where the player's character can talk and interact to succeed; pure roleplaying scenes, where characters and non-player characters are having discussions; interludes where the player characters can socialize without any pressure or rules; social time before, in between and after the game session.

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and Gorameios filled his lair with gold and jewels, stolen from the dark vaults of Saar-Atman; so infected by taint were the treasures, that the serpent was suffocated into an early death and the spirit of the conjuror won back the riches. In the nest of Gorameios does Saar-Atman forever brood."

The Explorer: The player wants to explore the game world and understand it, with their character merely acting as a mirror for the player as it is traveling in Ambria and Davokar. Appreciated rewards: New places, new persons and new mysteries.

The Dramaturge: The player seeks opportunities to experience or act out emotions not usually found in everyday life or otherwise unacceptable to act out/play with in a context where consequences become real. Players with a dramatic inclination can often act as instigators in the game, especially if they feel that the current session is boring or slow. Handled right this player can be a good energy boost for the group. Appreciated rewards: Scenes where the character can act as a leader – or an anti-leader, as a rebel in the group; situations where the characters are the balance of power and can control the turn of events.

Game Master Techniques

HERE ARE A NUMBER of different techniques that the Game Master can use, appropriate for giving the game a good start, keeping it going and for varying the story in interesting ways.

ALTERNATIVE CHARACTERS

A very concrete way to let the players see more of the world or to experience other perspectives is to temporarily let them change characters. These new characters can, for example, take the players to a different place or a different time, if only for a game session (or just part of a session). Another option is to go back in the characters' history, if it is long and mutual, so they can play their present characters, but a long time ago. *Experience* gained through these alternative characters is awarded to the primary characters, but no other rewards (thalers, artifacts, loot, etc.) are transferred to the actual characters.

Example *1: The session starts with everyone playing guards in the ruined castle that the characters are preparing to visit. The guards fight a desperate and predestined battle against the powerful lindworm that destroyed, and later came to live in, the ruin – which the player will face again, but this time with their usual player characters.*

Example *2: Many of the characters grew up in the same orphanage in Yndaros, and as a part of an adventure the Game Master throws them back to the orphanage, to when they were young.*

DEUS EX MACHINA

The technique of Deus Ex Machina means that the Game Master saves the player characters from trouble with the help of narrative tools. It can take many forms, but the Game Master may, for example, let an allied group of soldiers show up when a battle is about to go south and save the characters from certain death. Naturally, challenges solved in this way do not yield any *Experience* to the characters.

Example *1: The characters fight desperately against a blight beast and see death approach, when a band of elves joins the fight and saves the characters. Then, the leader of the elves demands that the characters solve a task in return; a task that the elves cannot solve themselves (inside Thistle Hold, for example). When, and if, the characters solve the task given by the elves, they get extra Experience as compensation for the hopeless battle against the blight beast.*

Example *2: Players can be allowed to invoke the use of Deus Ex Machina during an ongoing problem-solving event. Let us say that they are investigating a murder and are stuck. They then ask for help from the local Ordo Magica chapter to cast a ritual. In return, Ordo Magica demands a favor to be dealt with after the murder has been solved, which the characters accept. The ritual is performed and provides the characters with the clue they need to move on with the adventure. The Experience given as a result of the ritual is held hostage by the Game Master until the characters have solved Ordo Magica's problem. The characters can choose not to return the favor, with the effect of not getting the Experience that awaits them, as well as the loss of trust from the local chapter of Ordo Magica.*

IN MEDIAS RES

In Medias Res means to start in the middle of an event or something that is happening. For example, the adventure might start with an attack, an assassination attempt or an invasion. The players are forced to react to what's happening, and the adventure is then set into motion.

Example: *The characters wake up from an arrow that hits the inn's window shutter. The inn is under attack!*

INTERLUDE

An Interlude can happen between adventures or parts of an ongoing adventure. The characters get a chance to catch their breath, settle their business and spend *Experience*, while the Game Master gets a chance to bring in the player characters' everyday lives, as well as less epic, but equally important relations and situations.

In short, interludes are excellent opportunities for the players to develop their characters in small and everyday situations, and to put those moments into contrast with the life-and-death decisions of the adventures.

Example: *The characters return to Thistle Hold after a successful expedition into Davokar. After negotiating a good price for their treasures, they treat themselves to an evening at the Salons of Symbaroum, where they discuss their adventure, boast to their table neighbors and party into the night.*

NARRATIVE

The Narrative is a collective name for a numbers of different ways the Game Master can tell the players about the world. A good narrative makes the players see their part in the larger context. If used correctly, narratives can be very striking, but overused they can turn a game session into a story reading, rather than a game night.

Initial Narrative: An effective way to set the mood at the start of a session is to dim the light, play atmospheric music and describe a scene that is relevant to the session. The initial narrative can be a dream sequence, be told from the perspective of the enemy or be a historical event related to what is to come.

Dream Sequence: A dream sequence lets the characters share a common dream, whose content highlights, clarifies or complicates the story that the characters experience. The dream can either be disconnected from real events, or the Game Master can tie it to some known mystical artifact that binds the characters to events far, far away.

Historical Event: Adventures based or depending on historical events can benefit from narratives in the form of important events from the past, explaining or clarifying the conflicts of the present. Once more, dreams can be used to imply that the fate of the player characters is tied to these dramatic events of the past.

ARCH ENEMY

Most players love to hate a specific enemy a bit more than others, and the Game Master can use this by letting old enemies return during the run of a campaign. Of course, enemies that manage to get away from the characters can show up again; the same goes for undead versions of enemies that the characters have already defeated. It must also be said that descendants, disciples or lovers of a fallen enemy can hunt down and exact vengeance upon those who slew their relative, master or lover.

Monsters

THE RUINS OF SYMBAROUM, the depth of Davokar and the mountain valleys of the Ravens house a variety of creatures and monstrosities. This chapter first describes some general characteristics possessed by these creatures, depending on which monster category they belong to: Beasts, Abominations or Undead. The fourth category Cultural Beings is also described, even though its representatives are not characterized by the monstrous traits that are described in the second section of this chapter.

Monster Categories

A CREATURE'S AFFILIATION to a certain category decides which monstrous traits can be used when the creature is created. The category itself can also have rules related effects, affecting all of its more or less monstrous members.

Monsters and other opponents have the same attributes and attribute values as the player characters: 80 points are to be distributed among the attributes, with the requirements that only one of them can have a value of 15 and none of them can be higher than 15 or lower than 5.

ABOMINATIONS

Abominations are creatures thoroughly corrupted by the darkness of the world. Other abominations perceive such a creature as one of their own, and will not attack it at first. The creature may even use *Persuasive* against other abominations to affect their behavior.

Characters with the *Witchsight* ability can roll *[Vigilant←Discreet]* to realize that the creature is corrupted by darkness. Also, sensitive senses and minds – like those of children and animals – react with instinctive dislike towards the abomination, even if its appearance is mundane. Others can make a *[Vigilant←Discreet]* test in order to notice that said children or animals react the way they do.

Holy and unholy effects have a reversed effect on abominations: holy powers harm the creature instead of healing it, while unholy effects heal it instead of harming it. Finally, abominations can see in complete darkness, but they see as little as anyone else if they are actively blinded.

The Abominations category gives the creature access to the monstrous traits *Acidic Attack*, *Acidic Blood*, *Armored*, *Corrupting Attack*, *Natural Weapon*, *Regeneration* and *Robust*.

BEAST

Beasts are closely connected to the wild and untamed nature, be it in the form of the forest of Davokar, the valleys of the Ravens or the courses of the rivers. This category covers wild animals (both predators and herbivores) as well as tamed and human-trained animals. Cunning creatures, like lindworms and spider monsters, are also included

in the category of the beasts – while they have an intellect close to that of cultural beings, they are still fundamentally driven by instinct.

Beasts have monstrous traits like *Armored*, *Enthrall*, *Natural Weapon*, *Poisonous*, *Regeneration*, *Robust* and *Wings*.

All beasts have the *Bushcraft* trait. Most of them can also see in low light conditions, which means that they are not dependent on light sources in areas with dim light. However, in pitch black darkness they are as helpless as everyone else.

CULTURAL BEINGS

The category Cultural Beings includes the world's more or less intelligent, community-building creatures – for instance humans, elves, changelings, ogres, goblins and trolls. They have few features in common, other than that they organize themselves socially and develop different cultures depending on where they are located.

Cultural beings do not have access to monstrous traits, other than those named in the descriptions of the playable changeling, ogre and goblin races.

UNDEAD

The Undead category covers both spirits and walking corpses. Spirits are creatures without a physical body, while walking corpses are dead bodies possessed by a living spirit. Player characters with the *Witchsight* ability can make a *[Vigilant←Discreet]* test to realize that a creature they encounter is undead.

Spirits have the *Spirit Form* monstrous trait and often *Alternative Damage*, *Enthrall*, *Manifestation* and *Terrify* as well, while walking corpses have the *Undead* trait in addition to traits like *Gravely Cold*.

There are some features that all undead have in common. They do not sleep, starve or thirst; they cannot drown, cannot be poisoned by any conventional poison and cannot be afflicted by any ordinary disease. Also, they cannot be touched by corruption since they are all considered to be thoroughly corrupt. Moreover, holy and healing mystical powers are harmful to the undead creature, while unholy energies heal its wounds. All undead can see in complete darkness, but they see as little as everyone else if they are actively blinded. And finally, the undead do not have a *Pain Threshold*.

Monstrous Traits:

Acidic Attack
Acidic Blood
Alternative Damage
Armored
Corrupting Attack
Enthrall
Gravely Cold
Manifestation
Natural Weapon
Poisonous
Poison Spit
Regeneration
Robust
Spirit Form
Swarm
Terrify
Undead
Web
Wings

Monstrous Traits

DIFFERENT RACES VARY from each other in a number of ways, physically as well as socially. This is represented by traits. Traits differ from abilities since access to them is granted when choosing a race – or as a consequence of radical transformations later in the character's career.

Traits are divided into three levels (I, II, III). Also, note that some traits from the playable races are repeated in this section, but are described from the perspective of a non-player character, rather than that of a player character.

ACIDIC ATTACK

Either the creature's unarmed attack or its *Natural Weapon* is covered in acid so that each hit has a corrosive side effect on the target. The acid must first penetrate the target's Armor to deal damage, even if the initial attack does. Removing the acid from either body or armor requires that someone spends an Action and makes a successful *Cunning* test. *Acidic Attack* requires the *Acidic Blood* trait, at the same level or higher.

I **Reaction.** The acidic attack is weak and deals 3 points of damage for 3 turns.
II **Reaction.** The acidic attack is moderately strong and deals 4 points of damage for 4 turns.
III **Reaction.** The acidic attack is strong and deals 5 points of damage for 5 turns.

ACIDIC BLOOD

The creature's blood is corrosive, and sprays all around when the creature is hit by attacks. Whoever hits the creature in melee combat, and manages to damage it, must make a *Defense* test or be hit by the acidic blood. Removing the acid from either body or armor requires that someone spends an Action and makes a successful *Cunning* test (wash it away with water, dirt, sand or something similar).

I **Reaction.** The acidic blood is weak and deals 3 points of damage for 3 turns.
II **Reaction.** The acidic blood is moderately strong and deals 4 points of damage for 4 turns.
III **Reaction.** The acidic blood is strong and deals 5 points of damage for 5 turns.

ALTERNATIVE DAMAGE

The creature's attack harms a specific Attribute instead of *Toughness*, usually *Strong* or *Resolute*. If not specified in the monster description, the Game Master decides which one. This kind of damage affects all rolls made using that Attribute.

Alternative Damage heals, and can be healed, just like ordinary damage. If the Attribute reaches 0, the victim's soul or life force is devoured by the attacker and the victim dies. *Alternative Damage* requires the monstrous trait *Spirit Form*.

I **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 3 alternative damage, ignoring Armor.
II **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 4 alternative damage, ignoring Armor.
III **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 5 alternative damage, ignoring Armor.

ARMORED

The creature either has thick skin, scales or something else making it especially hard to wound. It cannot wear any additional armor over its natural armor, which, on the other hand, is not Impeding like ordinary armor is. However, the Man-at-arms ability enhances the creature's protection even further, in addition to its level in *Armored*.

I **Passive.** The creature has a natural protection of 2.
II **Passive.** The creature has a natural protection of 3.
III **Passive.** The creature has a natural protection of 4.

CORRUPTING ATTACK

Those of Davokar's creatures that are most corrupted have the ability to spread the dark taint through their claws and other natural weapons.

I **Passive.** The creature's attack oozes corruption and taints all who are wounded by its attacks. A victim that suffers at least 1 point of damage from the attack also suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption.
II **Passive.** A victim that suffers at least 1 point of damage from the attack also suffers 1D6 temporary Corruption.
III **Passive.** A victim that suffers at least 1 point of damage from the attack also suffers 1D8 temporary Corruption.

ENTHRALL

The creature can hypnotize its victims and make them unable to act until it is too late.

I **Active.** The creature's gaze forces its victim to make a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, or otherwise lose both its Actions in the upcoming turn.
II **Active.** The creature's sweet song or its hypnotic sound forces all its victims to make a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, or otherwise lose both its Actions in the upcoming turn.
III **Active.** As II, but the victims are enthralled until they make a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The enthrallment is broken if a victim is harmed in any way.

GRAVELY COLD

Wherever it moves, the creature spreads the cold of the grave around itself like an aura, and everyone in its immediate vicinity is at risk of being affected.

I **Free.** The creature spreads the paralyzing cold of the grave; enemies within melee distance are paralyzed, should they fail a *Resolute* test. One test is made each turn, and should the test be successful, the enemy can act as normal. Once an enemy has withstood the cold of the grave it cannot be affected again during the same scene.
II **Free.** As I, but with the addition that the cold is harmful, dealing 2 points of damage per turn to those affected, ignoring Armor.
III **Free.** As II, but the cold now affects enemies who fail a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test.

MANIFESTATION

The creature has disciplined its *Spirit Form* to the point where it can manifest itself physically for a shorter or longer period of time.

I **Free.** The spirit can manifest itself physically for one turn, and thereby act as if it had a physical body. If a turn's Movement Action(s) is enough to cross water, then the spirit can do so. The spirit can use its unarmed attacks or natural weapons during the turn, but suffers damage from anything that harms physical creatures.
II **Free.** The spirit can manifest itself with any weapons and armor it had when it died, and use them in battle. The spirit remains physical for as long as it pleases, but cannot change form in the middle of a turn – if the spirit has started its turn in physical form, then the turn is played in physical form. If it so chooses, the spirit can walk around in physical form for an entire scene, in order to cross water, for example. If the spirit is forced, or chooses, to return to its spectral form while crossing water, it is thrown back to solid ground.
III **Special.** The spirit has fully mastered its *Manifestation* and can act physically with any Actions it chooses, while remaining immaterial in regards to everything else. It can attack physically, yet defends itself like a spirit. The spirit cannot be harmed in any way, besides what is stated in the description of its level of *Spirit Form*. If it so chooses, the spirit can walk around unhindered in physical form, for a longer journey on a boat, for example. If the spirit is forced, or chooses, to return to its spectral form while crossing water, it is thrown back to solid ground.

NATURAL WEAPON

The creature is gifted with a well-developed natural weapon, such as sharp claws, teeth or a tail stinger. The *Natural Warrior* ability (see page 119) can be used to enhance the creature's *Natural Weapon* even further.

I **Passive.** The creature is equipped with some kind of natural weapon which deals 3 points of damage, instead of the usual 2 for unarmed attacks.
II **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 4 points of damage.
III **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 5 points of damage. The natural weapon now has the quality Long, allowing the creature to perform a Free Attack at the start of a combat against enemies with shorter weapons.

POISONOUS

The creature's unarmed attack or *Natural Weapon* is poisonous and each hit that wounds an enemy will also poison it, unless the victim succeeds with a *[Strong←Cunning]* test. The poison's effect can be cancelled if someone applies an antidote to the wound and succeeds with a *Cunning* test.

I **Passive.** The poison is weak and deals 2 points of damage for 2 turns.
II **Passive.** The poison is moderately strong and deals 3 points of damage for 3 turns.
III **Passive.** The poison is strong and deals 4 points of damage for 4 turns.

POISON SPIT

The creature is not just *Poisonous*; it can also spit venom at its enemies. The poison attack is performed just like an ordinary ranged attack; if hit the victim must pass a *[Strong←Cunning]* test to avoid being posioned. The venomous spit counts as a ranged attack. The poison's effect can be cancelled if someone applies an antidote and succeeds with a *Cunning* test. *Poison Spit* requires that the creature has the *Poisonous* trait at the same level or higher.

I **Active.** The poison is weak and deals 2 points of damage from 2 turns.
II **Active.** The poison is moderately strong and deals 3 points of damage for 3 turns.
III **Active.** The poison is strong and deals 4 points of damage for 4 turns.

REGENERATION

The creature spontaneously heals, without needing to spend either time or power to do so. However, the creature has a weakness, a specific type of damage that it cannot regenerate (which, of course, can be healed in other active ways).

The creature must choose a weakness related to some kind of damage it cannot heal automatically. Choose between magical weapons, elemental energies (fire or acid) and damage from either holy or unholy attacks.

I **Passive.** Regenerates 2 *Toughness* per turn.
II **Passive.** Regenerates 3 *Toughness* per turn.
III **Passive.** Regenerates 4 *Toughness* per turn.

ROBUST

The creature is bigger and tougher than usual, and can only wear modified light armor.

I **Passive.** The creature ignores 2 points of damage from each hit, in addition to any Armor it may wear. Once per turn, the creature deals an additional +2 points of damage with one of its melee attacks. The creature's *Defense* is calculated from the basis of *[Quick–2]*.
II **Passive.** The creature ignores 3 points of damage from each hit, in addition to any Armor it may wear. Once per turn, the creature deals an additional +3 points of damage with one of its melee attacks. The creature's *Defense* is calculated from the basis of *[Quick–3]*.
III **Passive.** The creature ignores 4 points of damage from each hit, in addition to any Armor it may wear. Once per turn, the creature deals an additional +4 points of damage with one of its melee attacks. The creature's *Defense* is calculated from the basis of *[Quick–4]*.

SPIRIT FORM

The creature is a spirit; it is immaterial and can neither affect nor be affected by physical effects. A spirit whose *Toughness* is brought down to 0 is banished from the area for a shorter or longer period of time. *Spirit Form* gives access to the *Alternative Damage*, *Manifestation* and *Terrify* monstrous traits.

I **Passive.** The creature can pass through barriers without problem, but cannot cross water even by bridges, boat or air. The spirit suffers half damage from weapon attacks. Alchemical effects on weapons and mystical powers deal full damage. Magical weapons deal full damage, as well.
II **Passive.** The spirit suffers half damage from weapon attacks, alchemical/mystical attacks as well as from magical weapons.
III **Passive.** Only mystical powers and magical weapons can harm the spirit, and then only with half damage.

SWARM

The creature is a collective, its mind spread among a swarm of bodies. The creature cannot be destroyed unless the entire swarm is obliterated.

I **Special.** The swarm suffers half damage from all attacks. If the swarm is damaged, and is brought down to below half its *Toughness*, the survival

instinct of the separate parts of the swarm takes over and its instincts cause the rest of the swarm to flee. A mental attack (where the swarm uses its *Resolute* to defend itself) affects the entire swarm.

II **Special.** The swarm suffers half damage from all attacks. If the swarm suffers damage from a single attack that exceeds its *Pain Threshold*, the survival instinct of the separate parts of the swarm takes over and its instincts cause the rest of the swarm to flee. Also, the swarm may make two attempts to resist mental attacks (where the swarm uses its *Resolute* to defend itself).

III **Special.** The collective mind of the swarm controls it, so that it only suffers a quarter of any damage taken from attacks. The swarm's cohesion is complete, and the swarm does not have to flee unless the overall intellect chooses to do so. The swarm may make two attempts to resist mental attacks (where the swarm uses its *Resolute* to defend itself).

TERRIFY

The creature can strike terror into the heart of one or more creatures. *Terrify* requires that the creature has the monstrous trait *Spirit Form*.

I **Active.** The creature's gaze forces a single victim to make a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, or automatically spend both of its actions backing away. If the victim cannot back away, it will defend itself in desperation, but cannot compel itself to attack. The victim may make a test each turn, trying to shrug off the fear.

II **Active.** The creature's horrific shriek forces everyone that is nearby to make a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, or automatically spend both of their actions backing away. If the victims cannot back away, they will defend themselves in desperation, but cannot compel themselves to attack. The victims may make a test each turn, trying to shrug off the fear.

III **Free.** As II, but the victims do not defend themselves against attacks, fleeing if possible, cowering in place if not. The victims may make a test each turn in order to shrug off the paralyzing fear.

UNDEAD

The creature is a spirit trapped inside a dead body. The spirit controls the slowly decaying corpse and is banished when the body is destroyed.

I **Passive.** The undead creature is not affected by poison or diseases, but takes the usual damage from physical effects except that the *Pain Threshold* is not used (pain and shock do not affect the walking corpse). The walking corpse does not heal naturally and is not affected by alchemical healing elixirs, but must instead eat raw meat (living or recently killed) or drink blood to heal, each point of *Toughness* that the creature consumes heals it by 2 points of *Toughness*.

II **Passive.** The walking corpse suffers only half damage from ordinary physical effects, such as weapons or elemental damage. Mystical powers that ignore Armor deal full damage as usual.

III **Passive.** The walking corpse suffers only half damage from alchemical and mystical effects as well, but takes full damage from magical weapons and holy effects.

WEB

The creature can spin tough webs and use them either passively or actively to capture its prey.

I **Passive.** The threads of the web force all who pass through it to make a *[Quick←Cunning]* test or get stuck. To get free requires a successful *[Strong←Cunning]* test, with one test being made each turn. A captured creature cannot move and must roll twice when attempting to perform any Actions – the attempt fails if either of these tests are unsuccessful.

II **Active.** Besides passive, pre-fabricated webs (as level I), the creature can now throw a net at an enemy as an Action. The victim can avoid the attack if it makes a successful *[Quick←Accurate]* test. A captured creature must succeed with a *[Strong←Cunning]* test in order to break free, with one test allowed per turn. A captured creature cannot move and must roll twice when attempting to perform any Actions – the attempt fails if either of these tests are unsuccessful.

III **Active.** The net is almost alive and obeys its creator; it has the passive ability to capture creatures (as level I) but the net can also strike out with up to three (3) threads per turn, with the same effect as level II.

WINGS

The creature is equipped with wings of some kind (either bird or insect-like) and has a more or less developed ability to fly.

I **Passive.** The creature can fly during its Movement Action, and therefore avoid Free Attacks when passing over an enemy.

II **Passive.** The creature can hover, meaning it can stand still in midair, out of reach from any melee attacks. To hover does not count as an Action.

III **Passive.** The creature can make sweeping attacks; it can use a part of its movement before an attack, and the rest afterwards. This way, it does not become bogged down in melee combat, while still being able to perform melee attacks itself.

Writings of unknown origin, which the Order Masters of Thistle Hold have been heard to argue about – is it a map, or possibly an instruction on how to grow Silver Lilies?

Monsters & Adversaries

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS about thirty monsters and adversaries that are more or less commonly encountered in Ambria and Davokar. To make it easier for the Game Master to see how they are connected, the creatures are sorted by family (for instance elves, predators and abominations). The families are in turn related to the creature categories described in previous chapters.

Elves

Category: Cultural being

ACCORDING TO BARBARIAN MYTHS the elves arrived in the region north of the Titans as late as at the time of Symbaroum's downfall; some even say that it was the elf prince Eneáno who planted the forest of Davokar, hoping to bury the blight-stricken land of the fallen empire. Whatever the truth may be, the elves currently living in Davokar regard themselves as the guardians of the woods. And with reference to ancient treaties they demand that both barbarians and Ambrians must stay clear of Davokar's depth and all of Symbaroum's ruins. Every violation of these treaties is regarded as an act of war.

When the Ambrians arrived in the region they had little knowledge about elves, and the common man still believes that elves in diverse life stages are widely different kinds of creatures. However, conversations with witches and the few elven emissaries that have arrived in Yndaros suggest that the elves live their life in a number of phases, separated by periods of dormancy during which the elf undergoes both physical and mental changes. It is also indicated that only some survive the dormancy, while the majority wither away and die before waking up to the next phase. In other words: even if there are a number of now living elves who were around at the time of Symbaroum's fall, they are for the aforementioned reasons few and almost impossible to communicate with.

This section introduces the first three life phases of the forest people. There also exist older elves, but they are largely unknown to the Ambrians and, additionally, highly disputed. Most authorities agree that the life span of the elves includes at least four, possibly five phases. If so, the fourth phase would consist of the allegedly reclusive Winter Elves; the fifth of an very small number who survive their fourth dormancy and awaken as extremely powerful beings, for instance

A lone summer elf equipped with a bow may be all it takes to stop a human expedition into the wilds, and force its surviving members to run for the forest edge.

SPRING ELF			
Race	Elf		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Long-lived*		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 15 (–5), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 7 (+3), **Strong** 5 (+5), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Dagger 3 (short), Bow 4		
Armor	None		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	3
Equipment	Nothing of value		
Shadow	Bright green, like the leaves on a baby birch (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The spring elves keep their distance and attack the enemy with their bows, or else try to lure victim into varying kinds of traps or ambushes.

the daunting Aloéna on Karvosti. But this theory is far from being regarded as fact. Instead there are those who argue that Aloéna and others like her have no relation to the elves; that they are a separate race of ancient individuals, that they are earth-bound demigods or that they are embodied forces of nature.

FAIRY (SPRING ELF)

During the first phase of its life the elf is characterized by a playful curiosity and a cautiousness which has made the elf experts at Ordo Magica compare them to kittens. The phase is assumed to last for about fifty years, during which the fairy grows about four feet tall. It should also be noted, that to the extent that the elf experts' metaphor is correct it must refer to the offspring of a dreadfully cruel predatory cat – the spring elves love to subject both their elder siblings and unsuspecting humans to mean pranks; pranks which seem to cause more giggles and merriment the nastier they are.

The fairies almost never leave the safety of the forest. On some singular occasions there have been reports describing encounters with elven patrols including one or two fairy scouts, but mostly they gather in large packs and avoid contact with their elders. However, one might wonder if the situation is about to change. Some malicious treasure hunters have trained to become fairy-hunters instead, seeking to collect the allegedly miraculous hair,

EARLY SUMMER ELF			
Race	Elf		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Long-lived*		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 15 (–5)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (novice), *Marksman* (adept), *Sixth Sense* (novice)		
Weapons Vigilant/ Accurate	Bow 5, Spear 4 (long)		
Armor	Woven Silk 2 (flexible)		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	4
Equipment	Herbal cure, a dozen arrows		
Shadow	Luscious green (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The elves of early summer trust in their bows and only use the spears when absolutely necessary. In close combat they use *Acrobatics* to withdraw from melee, in order to take advantage of the spear's length again and again.

ears and nails of the spring elves. It is difficult and dangerous work, since the fairies leave few traces of their whereabouts and often are cunning enough to transform the hunter into their prey. On the other hand, anyone who manages to capture a group of spring elves can expect to earn a small fortune when selling the harvest to alchemists in Thistle Hold.

ELFLING (SUMMER ELF)

Those who awaken after their first dormancy and enter the life phase of the Summer Elf are a still curious but not nearly as cautious group. The Elflings are known as hot-tempered, aggressive and impulsive, bordering on foolhardy. Up to five-and-a-half-feet tall, nimble as mare cats and with about 150 years to train, they develop into skilled warriors, qualified to take on any human fighter.

The Elflings make up the backbone of Davokar's defense force, weakly armored but equipped with spears and bows. Most often they are led by an Autumn Elf, but sometimes their impatience makes them renounce the guidance of older siblings. Such war bands, consisting of between ten and thirty elven hotheads, always prefer attack over defense and may very well assault villages in the lowlands instead of their normal targets: outposts, caravans and free settlers in the woods.

ELF (AUTUMN ELF)

It is said that the dormancy between summer and autumn can be as long as fifty years. The elves who wake up are both taller and much more even-tempered than their younger kinsmen – as the elf expert Master Goncai in Thistle Hold has described it: *"The Autumn Elf is old enough to appreciate the seriousness of the world, yet still young enough to care about the march of time"*. It is elves in the autumn phase that assumes the responsibility of leadership and that communicate with the outside world, as for instance the envoy Elori in Yndaros or Gealóna who has been permitted to live and work at the Ordo Magica chapter in Agrella.

According to some approximations the elven autumn lasts up to about the age of four hundred years. During that time the elf grows seven feet tall, very powerful and often equally wise. It is evident that their opinions vary with regard to the Ambrians, since some are seen leading hordes of Elflings in attacks against Ambrian settlements while others engage in more diplomatic relations or even collaborations. But regardless of how they feel about humans, the autumn elves are formidable opponents for anyone who makes them angry, not least due to their deep understanding of how to manipulate the mystical energies of the world.

LATE SUMMER ELF			
Race	Elf		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Long-lived*		
Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 5 (+5)			
Abilities	*Marksman* (master), *Man-at-arms* (adept), *Polearm Mastery* (master)		
Weapons Vigilant/ Accurate	Bow 5, Spear 5 (long)		
Armor	Lacquered Silk Cuirass 4 (flexible)		
Defense	0		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	4
Equipment	Herbal cure		
Shadow	Deep green (corruption: 0)		
Tactics: The elves of late summer prefer to use their bows, but if it comes to close combat they do not mind standing in the front line, keeping the enemies in check with their spears while other elves fill them full of arrows.			

AUTUMN ELF			
Race	Elf		
Resistance	Strong		
Traits	*Long-lived*		
Accurate 9 (+1), **Cunning** 13 (–3), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 11 (–1), **Quick** 5 (+5), **Resolute** 15 (–5), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Loremaster* (master), *Medicus* (master), *Mystical Power* (*Bend Will*, master), *Mystical Power* (*Larvae Boil*, master), *Ritualist* (master)		
Weapons Accurate	Sword 4		
Armor	Woven Silk 2 (flexible)		
Defense	+5		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	4
Equipment	10 Herbal cures		
Shadow	Yellow and red as the autumn leaves, with faint streaks of rusty brown (corruption: 2*)		
Tactics: Autumn elves lead their siblings from a distance, supporting allies with their mystical powers.			

*Thanks to mystical protection while learning the rituals

Weapons, Armor and Defense

The stat blocks in this section present values for weapons, Armor and Defense based on the traits and abilities of the creatures. You still have to study the specific traits and abilities to understand what kind of actions the creature can perform, but the damage, Armor and Defense values already include any effects from such characteristics. Finally, note that below the header Weapons an attribute is mentioned. This is the attribute the creature (most often) uses when attacking, again based on which abilities it has.

Trolls

Category: Cultural being

The barbarian legends about Troll-Mother Ognyx are very popular. They are thrilling, frightening and always end with the vicious and violent death of the taboo-breaking human.

AMONG AMBRIANS the troll is the epitome of Davokar's many horrors. If you are to believe the stories told at taverns and inns, the trolls are numerous but also a varied bunch of creatures, from human-sized brutes to virtual behemoths. That they are driven by hunger is evident, also that they seem to lack the fears and wariness of humans – two facts which make them prone to attack travelers and caravans in the wilds even if they are outnumbered.

In sharp contrast to the Ambrian experience, barbarian legends speak of civilized trolls; trolls living in organized, underground villages; trolls that tunnel through the ground in search of jewels and metals, that weave magical fabrics and brew healing juices. But the special expert on the topic at Ordo Magica, Chapter Master Argoi in Kurun, maintains that even if that may have been true one or two centuries ago, a majority of today's trolls are too aggressive to obey, compromise and reason – abilities that are a must in all civilized communities.

RAGE TROLL

Rage Troll is the Ambrian name for the most commonly encountered type of this beastly race. In height they are comparable with Ambrians and barbarians, but their bodily constitution is more similar to a bear's, or perhaps even more to the type of grotesque bull that was seen pulling the enemy's wagons during the Great War.

Rage trolls can be encountered individually or in groups. The former are often described as extremely ravenous and aggressive, to the extent that they very well may attack fortified villages singlehanded. The ones living in groups are probably just as hungry and combative as their lone-wandering relatives, but they are not as reckless – maybe because they are wiser, maybe because they have allowed themselves to be disciplined by the group's leader. Irrespective of the reason, there is no doubt that many a colony, outpost and caravan have been massacred by a posse of rage trolls led by some bellowing Liege Troll.

LIEGE TROLL

Far more uncommon than the rage trolls are the terrors that the Ambrians call Liege Trolls. And that is a good thing! By all accounts these giants are about ten feet tall, shrewdly calculating and purposely brutal – towards humans and beasts as well as their own followers. Aside from a few questionable reports the liege trolls are never seen alone; they have gotten their name because they

RAGE TROLL, FAMISHED			
Race	Troll		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Long-Lived*, *Natural Weapon* (I), *Robust* (I)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 11 (–1), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 9 (+1)			
Abilities	*Berserker* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Claws 8 (short)		
Armor	Troll skin 4		
Defense	+7		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Bright red, like arterial blood full of life (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The famished Rage Troll attacks one target at a time, until all of them are dead.

RAGE TROLL, GROUP-LIVING			
Race	Troll		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Long-Lived*, *Natural Weapon* (I), *Regeneration* (III), *Robust* (I)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 11 (–1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 9 (+1)			
Abilities	*Berserker* (adept), *Natural Warrior* (novice)		
Weapons Accurate	Claws 9 (short)		
Armor	Troll skin 4 (regenerates 4 toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid)		
Defense	+7		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	Lucky charm in the form of a human cranium		
Shadow	Blood red (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The group-living Rage Trolls attack in packs, trying to encircle the target. Then the berserker rage usually does the trick.

always surround themselves with a court of about five to twenty devoted rage trolls, prepared to do anything for their master.

In barbarian legends the liege trolls often come across as tribal leaders, indeed crude and domineering but with the ability to plan, organize and order the rage trolls about. Even if there may be some truth to that, there is nothing to indicate that they have any higher concerns than to fill their own bellies. Liege trolls do not build communities; they exploit their lesser siblings for personal comfort and in defense against other dangers in the forest – at least if one is to judge from the observations gathered by Master Argoi in Kurun.

ARCH TROLLS

The roaming titans commonly called Arch Trolls do not have much more than some facial features in common with smaller trolls. Furthermore, the scarce observations which have been written down disagree regarding everything except when describing them as having the height of between two and three men. Aside from that the arch trolls have been portrayed as being skinny or fat, crooked or stately, stupid or wise; some describe them as having horns, others as having long and greasy hair.

The Ambrians and barbarians who claim to have encountered an arch troll and survived to tell about it all say that they have done so in one of two ways – either they have spun around and fled for their lives, or they have been let loose after having performed some kind of service. Regarding the latter, Grand Master Seldonio has transcribed an interview with a nameless fortune-hunter who claimed to have survived two arch troll encounters. The the first time he did so by answering a series of challening riddles; the second time by actually singing an exhausted yet irritatingly spirited arch troll to sleep.

LIEGE TROLL			
Race	Troll		
Resistance	Strong		
Traits	*Armored* (I), *Long-Lived, Natural Weapon* (I), *Regeneration* (III), *Robust* (II)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 11 (–1), **Quick** 9 (+1), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 18 (–8), **Vigilant** 7 (+3)			
Abilities	*Alchemy* (novice), *Berserker* (master), *Exceptionally Strong* (master), *Natural Warrior* (master)		
Weapons Accurate	Claws 13 (short), 2 attacks at the same target 13/10		
Armor	Troll skin 7 (regenerates 4 toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid)		
Defense	+4		
Toughness	18	**Pain Threshold**	9
Equipment	Crude alchemical equipment, weak poison, weak antidote, jewelry and trinkets (1D10 thaler)		
Shadow	Deep red with faint streaks of rust (corruption: 2)		
Tactics: The liege troll sends Rage Trolls forth to assess the strength of the opponent, then attacks the physically weakest target – preferably a mystic since they are both weak and dangerous.			

ARCH TROLL			
Race	Troll		
Resistance	Mighty		
Traits	*Armored* (III), *Enthrall* (III), *Long-Lived, Natural Weapon* (III), *Regeneration* (III), *Robust* (III)		
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 16 (–6), **Strong** 18 (–8), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Alchemy* (master), *Berserker* (master), *Exceptionally Strong* (master), *Exceptionally Resolute* (master), *Iron Fist* (master)		
Weapons Strong	Claws 16 (long)		
Armor	Troll skin 10 (regenerates 4 toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid)		
Defense	+7		
Toughness	18	**Pain Threshold**	9
Equipment	Alchemical equipment, 10 waybreads, Wraith Dust, Strong poison, Elixir of Life, Strong antidote, Eye Drops.		
Shadow	Bluish red, like the anoxic blood of the deepest veins (corruption: 0)		
Tactics: The arch troll prefers to enthrall the target, hoping to learn more about it. If that is not possible it unleashes its destructive powers and claws its way through one opponent at a time.			

Table 29: Monsters and Adversaries

FAMILY	BEING	VARIANT	RESISTANCE	CATEGORY
Elves	Spring Elf		Weak	Cultural being
	Summer Elf	Early Summer	Ordinary	
		Late Summer	Challenging	
	Autumn Elf		Strong	
Trolls	Rage Troll	Famished	Ordinary	Cultural being
		Group-living	Challenging	
	Liege Troll		Strong	
	Arch Troll		Mighty	
Human adversaries	Cultist	Cult Follower	Weak	Cultural being
		Cult Leader	Ordinary	
	Brigand	Robber	Weak	
		Robber Chief	Ordinary	
	Ranger	Queen's Ranger	Ordinary	
		Ranger Captain	Challenging	
	Witchhunter	Self-taught Witchhunter	Weak	
		Black Cloak	Ordinary	
	Treasure-Hunter	Fortune-Hunter	Weak	
		Plunderer	Ordinary	
	Clan Warrior	Village Warrior	Ordinary	
		Guard Warrior	Challenging	
Spiders	Etterherd		Ordinary	Beasts
	Tricklesting		Ordinary	
Predators	Mare Cat		Ordinary	Beasts
	Baiagorn		Ordinary	
	Aboar		Challenging	
Reptiles	Kanaran		Challenging	Beasts
	Lindworm		Strong	
Winged creatures	Violing		Ordinary	Beasts
	Dragon Fly		Challenging	
Abominations	Blight Born	Blight Born Human	Ordinary	Abominations
		Blight Born Elk	Ordinary	
		Blight Born Aboar	Strong	
	Primal Blight Beast		Mighty	
Undead	Frost Light		Weak	Undead
	Dragoul		Ordinary	
	Necromage		Challenging	
	Cryptwalker		Strong	

Human Adversaries

Category: Cultural being

ACTS OF VIOLENCE lie close at hand for both barbarians and Ambrians – the latter's warring past and tendency to value the community over the individual corresponds to the barbarian clan culture and the harsh living conditions of Davokar. Thus, "Where the thoughts run out, the fists take over" is a suitable proverb for describing conflict management in both groups, except in situations where thoughts never enter the picture.

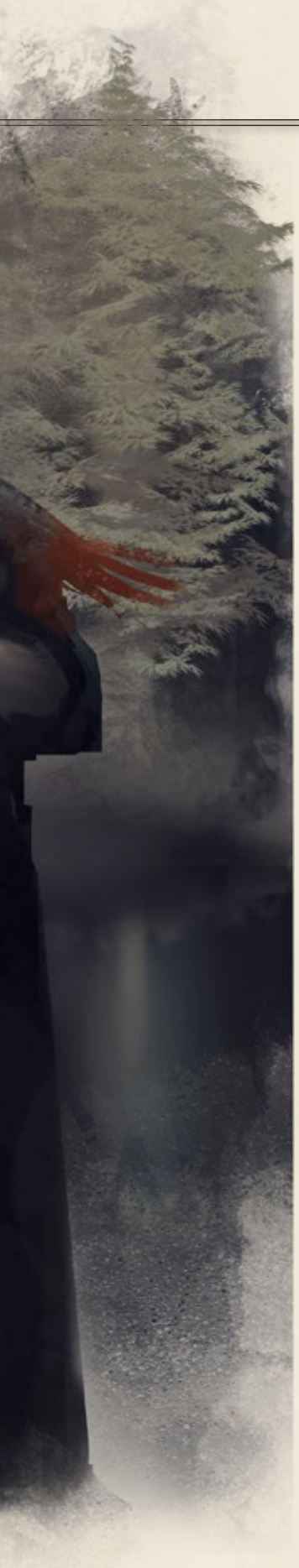
Whether a human acts as a friend or a foe is of course determined by circumstances. For a person who does not hesitate to meddle with the corrupt powers of Davokar, the cultist may be a friend as likely as an enemy; the opposite applies to the witchhunter. Generally, one can say that no matter what alliances you have or what ideal you aspire to you will always make more enemies than friends – the people of the Davokar region are not often completely neutral and no one survives for long without aligning themselves with one faction or another.

CULTIST

Humans who chose to explore and exploit the dark forces of Davokar are here assembled under the epithet of Cultist. Among the barbarians they have always existed – individuals or groups who violate the taboos of their clan in the hope of growing in strength and influence. And among the Ambrians it appears to be more and more common that people devote themselves to the darkness in order to gain an advantage in the struggle for resources, power and glory.

According to rumor, cultists can be found within all ranks and regions in Queen Korinthia's realm, even if they are most common among fortune-hunters and free settlers close to or in the woods.

The typical cult is characterized by a strict hierarchy, with a strong leader on top, surrounded and backed by a crowd of loyal followers. They often convene at locations with some



CULT FOLLOWER

Race	Human		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Bushcraft* or *Privileged*		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 15 (–5), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 11 (–1), **Resolute** 5 (+5), **Strong** 9 (+1), **Vigilant** 13 (–3)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	One-handed weapon 4		
Armor	Leather 2 (Impeding)		
Defense	+1		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	Cowl and mask, 1D10 shillings		
Shadow	Braided silver and/or green with a few black strands (corruption: 2)		

Tactics: The average cult follower tries to flee if the odds are not in its favor or a leader is not there to whip him or her into battle. If the leader falls, most followers reassess the situation and make a run for it, while a few fight to the death with the fire of the fanatic.

ROBBER

Race	Human or Goblin		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Bushcraft* (human) or *Shortlived* (goblin)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 5 (+5), **Discreet** 13 (–3), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 7 (+3), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 15 (–5)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	One-handed weapon 4, Throwing weapon 3		
Armor	Crow armor 3 (cumbersome)		
Defense	+4		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	1D6 throwing weapons, pouch of chewing resin, 1D10 ortegs		
Shadow	Various shades of green (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: Robbers have learned to calculate the odds and will not attack if outnumbered – not even a strong leader can force them to attack a superior enemy.

CULT LEADER

Race	Human		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Contacts*		
Accurate 9 (+1), **Cunning** 13 (–3), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 15 (–5), **Quick** 5 (+5), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Leader* (novice), *Mystical power* (*Curse*, adept), *Ritualist* (novice, *Possess*)		
Weapons Accurate	Sword 4		
Armor	Woven silk 2 (Flexible)		
Defense	+5		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	4
Equipment	Embroidered cowl and a ghastly mask, 1D10 thaler		
Shadow	Brown with shades of purple, like an oily puddle (corruption: 4)		

Tactics: The cult leader hides behind his or her followers, leading them from a safe distance, but can engage the enemy if the Grand Plan hinges on it.

ROBBER CHIEF

Race	Human		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Contacts*		
Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 15 (–5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 10 (0), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (novice), *Dominate* (adept), *Twin Attack* (adept)		
Weapons Persuasive	Sword and axe 4, 2 attacks on the same target		
Armor	Crow armor 3 (cumbersome)		
Defense	0		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	Broad-brimmed hat with colorful feather, 1D10 shilling		
Shadow	Green with spots of copper (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The leader of the outfit fights along with his or her fellow raiders; anything else would not be tolerated. However, he or she makes use of the *Dominate* ability to steer enemies to other targets.

kind of mystical connotation and on dates corresponding with meaningful natural phenomena – as for instance the blood cult exposed in Templewall in Year 19 by the Black Cloaks, which convened inside an old burial mound and always when the moon was new.

BRIGAND

Securing a job in Ambria is not easy; securing a well-paid job is even harder – these facts are the main reason why so many resort to robbery and theft. Anywhere where valuables are transported brigands may appear; they attack along the rivers, on the roads of the lowlands and not least in mountain passes or in the forests.

Two of the most feared bands of brigands are based in the valleys of the Titans. One is led by the notorious Ice Witch, the daughter of Old Kadizar's last Chieftain, the other by an ogre know as Mound who commands a brutal horde of goblins and rage trolls. Other examples are the highwaymen of the free settlement Entekka, who primarily raid caravans traveling between Thistle Hold and Karvosti, and the notoriously cruel Captain Bartolo, whose pirates attack convoys on Lake Volgoma and on the rivers Eanor and Eblis.

RANGER

The one who ventures into Davokar without having the proper Explorer's License needs to be cautious. The Queen's Rangers are tasked with patrolling the forest outskirts and sometimes make detours deeper into the woods. Such detours are most often made by a squad or a platoon of Rangers who have been tasked with investigating the veracity of certain rumors or to track down a particular beast that has attacked Thistle Hold, Kastor or some other border settlement. Irrespective of the purpose of their journey, they travel with the permanent duty to check up on everyone encountered in Davokar; those who do not have their license in order will be shackled, or put to death, if they struggle.

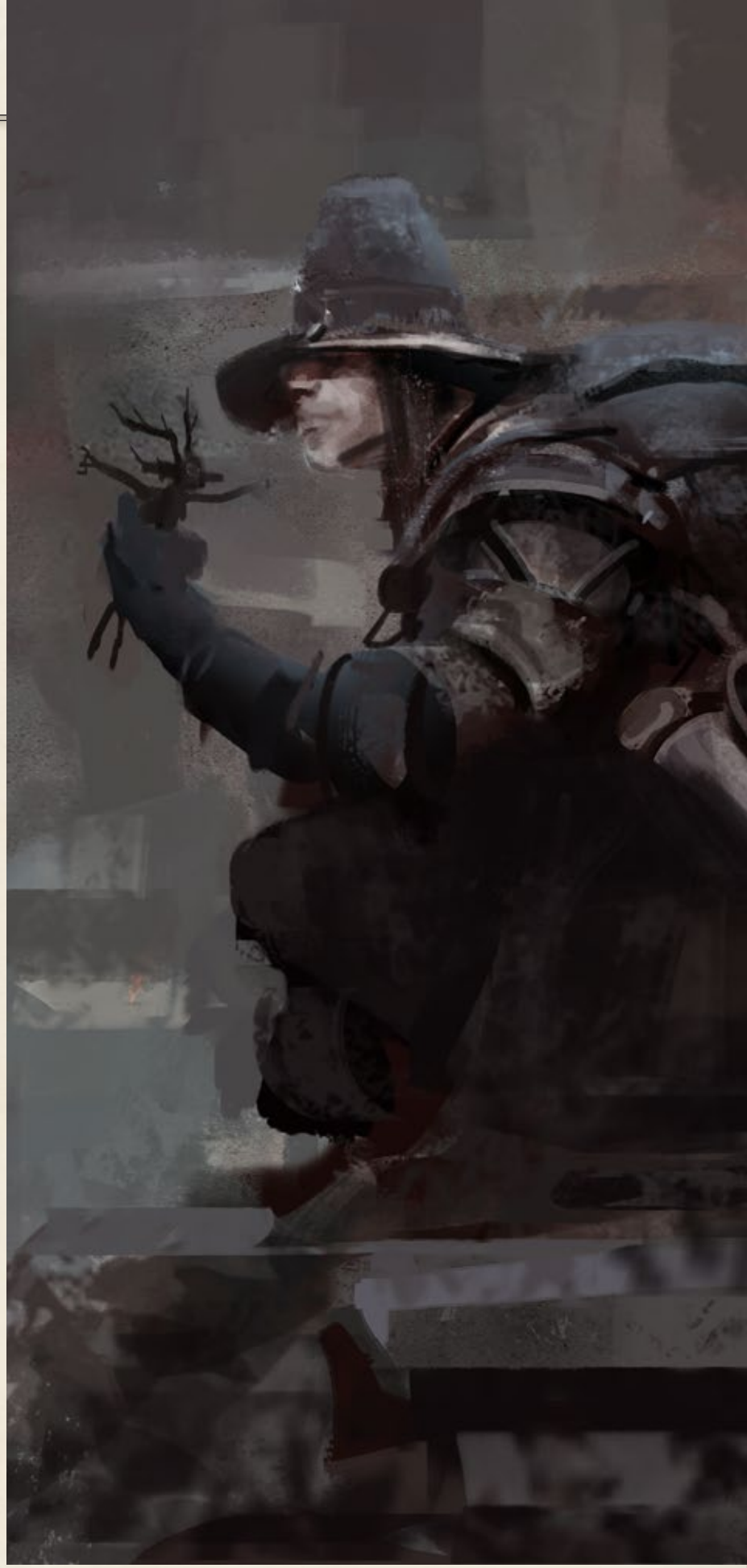
The Rangers are selected from within the regular army; they are resilient, experienced in combat and skilled when it comes to moving silently through the wilds. Some Rangers are specialists in various areas – beast lore, legends or fighting certain types of enemies – and sometimes they travel in the company of experts such as master builders, cartographers or war mages from Ordo Magica. A squad of Rangers, led by some scarred captain, is truly a force to be reckoned with – something which many unlicensed treasure-hunters have had to experience...

QUEEN'S RANGER	
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	*Bushcraft*
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 13 (–3), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 10 (0), **Vigilant** 15 (–5)	
Abilities	*Loremaster* or *Medicus* or *Beast Lore* (novice), *Tactician* (adept), *Twin Attack* (novice)
Weapons Accurate	Bow 4, Sword 4 and Dagger 3
Armor	Woven silk 2 (flexible)
Defense	–4
Toughness	10 **Pain Threshold** 5
Equipment	Scrolls (on area of expertise), a dozen arrows, waybread, 1 herbal cure (if Medicus 5 doses), 1D10 shillings
Shadow	Silver-shimmering (corruption: 0)
Tactics: A Ranger always assesses its target and attacks the weakest spot. They are scouts first and foremost, not warriors, and will refrain from attacking if the odds are stacked against them. If so, they trail their target until the odds have shifted or reinforcements have arrived.	

RANGER CAPTAIN	
Race	Human
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	*Bushcraft*
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 13 (–3), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 10 (0), **Vigilant** 15 (–5)	
Abilities	*Leader* (adept), *Tactician* (master), *Twin Attack* (master)
Weapons Cunning/ Accurate	Fencing sword 5 (balanced) and sword 4 Long bow 4 (precise)
Armor	Lacquered Silk Cuirass 3 (flexible)
Defense	–4
Toughness	10 **Pain Threshold** 5
Equipment	Map of the area, waybread, 2 herbal cures, 1D10 thaler
Shadow	Silver with streaks of gold (corruption: 0)
Tactics: The experienced Ranger fights in the front line, setting the standard for others to follow.	

SELF-TAUGHT WITCHHUNTER			
Race	Human		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Contacts*		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 9 (+1), **Resolute** 15 (–5), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 13 (–3)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Crossbow 5, axe 4		
Armor	Chainmail 3 (Impeding)		
Defense	+3 (shield)		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	Book with prayers, tools for interrogations, 1D10 shilling		
Shadow	Shiny copper with spots of corrosion (corruption: 1)		
Tactics: The witchhunter fires a bolt, then attacks the target with axe and shield – the target being an abomination, at least in the eyes of the witchhunter...			

BLACK CLOAK			
Race	Human (Ambrian)		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Contacts*		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 9 (+1), **Resolute** 15 (–5), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 13 (–3)			
Abilities	*Beast Lore* (novice), *Ritualist* (novice, *Holy Smoke*), *Steadfast* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Crossbow 5, sword 4		
Armor	Scalemail 3 (Impeding)		
Defense	+3 (shield)		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	Book with prayers, tools for interrogations, incenses, 1D10 thaler		
Shadow	Silver with blackened spots (corruption: 3)		
Tactics: The Black Cloak reveals abominations by the use of rituals, but if time is scarce he or she fires the crossbow and follows up with the sword. Better to slay an innocent than to see an abomination escape, such is the motto of a Black Cloak.			



WITCHHUNTER

The Witchhunter is specialized in fighting abominations, cultists and other evils which draw their strength from the dark of Davokar. Some are nothing but charlatans – brutal, unscrupulous thugs who roam from village to village and collects pay to expose "the evil" behind everything from bad harvests to dried out wells and violent outbreaks of the flu; often some poor eccentric or outsider who is totally without blame. Others know what they are doing...

The witchhunters schooled by, or belonging to, the order of the Twilight Friars and for whom the fight against the dark is a calling rather than a profession are feared by any and all. Among the worst things that could happen to an honest Ambrian is to be blamed for "walking in darkness", which is why everyone is careful not to end up on their bad side. The witchhunters tend to be quick to take advantage of their position – wherever they roam they live and eat for free and can expect help with everything from the mending of clothes to the sharpening of weapons. As the famous Black Cloak Edo Adeio once expressed it: "I am the wall behind which the people may rest, I am the blade that mirrors Prios' clearest light; who then am I to refuse the offerings made by those who want to be at my service?"

TREASURE-HUNTER

We make up many names for those we love; the same is true for the ones we detest. Call them treasure-hunters, fortune-hunters, explorers or grave robbers – many are the Ambrians who put their lives at risk in the hope of finding riches in the ruins of old Symbaroum. Nowadays most people have realized the foolishness in challenging Davokar singlehandedly, which is why almost everyone travels with at least four companions. But the composition of the groupings may of course vary considerably, from being made up of a handful of former peasants scratching for precious metals in the forest outskirts to disciplined expeditions led by Ordo Magica or some ambitious nobleman.

The plunderers described below are of the brutish kind – groups of individuals who have managed to scrape together enough coin to buy an Explorer's License and ventured into the woods hoping to find the mother lode. As they have risked everything they own, and maybe even taken loans from some shady moneylender, they are not likely to abandon their dig-site without a fight. For that reason it is probably true that in the outskirts of Davokar treasure-hunters are killed by competitors as often as they are by beasts, elves or local barbarians.

FORTUNE-HUNTER			
Race	Changeling, human or goblin		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Bushcraft* (human), *Long-lived* (changeling), *Short-lived* and *Pariah* (goblin)		
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 7 (+3), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 13 (–3)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Spiked club 4, throwing knife 3		
Armor	Studded leather 2 (Impeding)		
Defense	+1 (shield)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	Lucky charm, dice set, 3 throwing knives		
Shadow	Green or copper (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The fortune-hunter flings his or her throwing knives from behind the shield, and enters into melee when the knives run out, or if the enemy forces him to do so.

PLUNDERER			
Race	Ogre		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Long-lived, Robust* (I)		
Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 11 (–1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 7 (+3)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (novice), *Two-handed force* (adept)		
Weapons Strong	Two-handed hammer 8		
Armor	Tough skin and Leather 4 (Impeding)		
Defense	+1		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	Sack with putrid food		
Shadow	Crimson red (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The plunderer marches straight into battle, hungry for loot and coin.

CLAN WARRIORS

For the barbarian clans of Davokar fighting is as natural as breathing. From childhood both girls and boys are trained to use the weapons of the clan, most often axe or spear in combination with a shield.

With the possible exception of the now mercantile clan of Odaiova, fighting skills are the most highly respected ability among the barbarians – the chieftains almost always gain their position by proving themselves in combat. Every village has many capable warriors and the best of them are selected to be part of the chieftain's guard. And almost all of them nurture the dream of one day being chosen to represent the clan in the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath on Karvosti.

Thanks to taboos you seldom encounter clan warriors anywhere but in the outskirts of the forest. However, the exceptions become more frequent with time. In Thistle Hold and Blackmoor there are numerous sellswords with a barbarian heritage, and there are also defectors from the clans who ignore the truths of old and venture deeper into the woods in search of ruins to plunder.

The Warriors of the Clans

If you take a closer look at the members of the Wrathguard you will see variations caused by the heritage of individual guards.

The peculiarities most talked about in Ambria are displayed by the warriors of Baiaga and Karohar – the former fighting alongside their tame baiagorns, the latter armed with foot long claw-weapons and spear slings. But other clan warriors also have their quirks. For instance, the fighters of Gaoia use poisons to a greater extent than others and some of them master the ability to hurl venomous spiders at their adversaries. Among the fighters from clan Enoai you will find the renowned troll tamers, who have learnt how to subjugate and control rage trolls, for use as camp guards or as the vanguard in battle.

To the above mentioned one should probably add the unverified rumors of the so-called Predator Clan. Judging by the tall tales, its rabid warriors are fired up on strong elixirs and outfitted with natural weapons created by the dark arts known as bone sculpting and flesh forging – horns, fangs, claws or limbs deformed into serrated bone scythes.

VILLAGE WARRIOR			
Race	Human (barbarian)		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Bushcraft*		
Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 5 (+5), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (novice), *Shield Fighter* (adept), *Steel throw* (novice)		
Weapons Accurate	Axe 5, shield bash 2 (chance to knock-down), throwing spear 4		
Armor	Bear pelt 2 (Impeding)		
Defense	–3 (shield)		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	Hunting traps and fishing gear, wooden figurine (the clan's spirit guardian), 3 throwing spears, 1D10 ortegs		
Shadow	Blooming green (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: Village warriors are used to skirmish fighting and start by throwing their spears before gripping their axes. If the odds are declining, they withdraw from melee and back away while throwing additional spears at the enemy.

GUARD WARRIOR			
Race	Human (barbarian)		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Bushcraft*		
Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (master), *Man-at-arms* (adept), *Two-handed force* (master)		
Weapons Strong	Double-axe 11 (deep impact), ignoring Armor		
Armor	Scalemail 4 (Impeding)		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	A wooden or metal beaker, wooden figurine (the clan's spirit guardian), stone for sharpening the axe, 1D10 shillings		
Shadow	Deep green (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The warriors of the clan chieftain's guard lead by example, engaging the enemy in close combat, striking them down and finishing them off with mighty blows of the axe.

Spiders

Category: Beasts

IN THE TALES of the barbarians, the spider comes off as one of Davokar's most noble and powerful beings, at least from a historical perspective. The legend of the Spider King is well-known also among Ambrians – a ruthless warlord who ruled the woods some five centuries ago; member of a monstrous clan of spider-like humanoids and with a host comprised of spiders and various forms of amphibian creatures.

Most stories suggest that it was the threat of the Spider King that motivated the barbarian clans to unite under a High Chieftain, and that their combined forces managed to crush his empire. The legend also implies that the monstrous clan still lives on in the depth of Davokar, and that there still exist giant spiders and toad-monsters descended from the monarch's hordes. Connections have also been made to the skeletal statue in Thistle Hold

In the depth of Davokar, nets are spun by monstrous spiders that stem from the era of the Spider King – at least that is what the story-tellers claim.

and to the rumored Predator Clan, but according to Ordo Magica there are no reliable accounts to support such assumptions. Instead, most believe that if there is any truth to the legend, both the clan of the Spider King and all of the larger spider races were eliminated in the campaigns of the first High Chieftains. Certainly, spiders still thrive in Davokar and they are indeed a serious threat, but they are not especially organized or intelligent.

ETTERHERD

The fist-sized Etterherd hunts in packs, poisonous enough to kill a grown man and aggressive enough to actually try. When the pack has made a kill the spiders dig into the corpse to lay their eggs. The carcass is later devoured from the inside and finally erupts when a new generation of etterherds is ready to see the light of day.

The barbarians in the northern clans of Gaoia and Enoai have struggled with these packs for a long time, but the problem is spread throughout all of Davokar. In recent years, attacks on convoys traveling along the Doudram, Eanor and Malgomor rivers have become more and more frequent – the etterherds lay in wait in tree tops that lean out over the water and attack the warm bodies onboard boats passing underneath.

TRICKLESTING

The venomous Tricklestings build their colonies underground, often on the border between the barbarian hunting territories and the forest deep. Very little is known about these net-weaving hunters – they seem to be able to grow up to a meter in diameter, they are masters at moving silently, are skilled climbers and quicker than wolves over short distances. According to the witches they also possess some kind of primitive consciousness and can communicate with each other in a fully developed language based on whispers, hisses and clicking sounds.

The tricklestings often hunt in packs of three to five spiders, either by sneaking up on solitary wanderers or by first trapping them in their sturdy nets. The nets are sometimes woven vertically between trees, difficult to detect in the dusk of the forest. At other times the vertical nets are used to lure the wanderer on a detour mined with nets spun on the ground and camouflaged with leaves and twigs. It should also be mentioned that the tricklestings are sometimes accompanied by etterherds who opportunistically attack prey rejected by the larger spiders.

ETTERHERD			
Race	Spider		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Natural Weapon* (I), *Poisonous* (I), *Swarm* (II)		
Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 5 (+5), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Bite 3, poison 2 for 2 turns		
Armor	None		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	3
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Greenish purple (corruption: 1)		

Tactics: The spider swarm gathers around its prey, biting and biting until it is dead. Then the swarm is off to the next target to repeat the procedure.

TRICKLESTING			
Race	Spider		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Natural Weapon* (I), *Poisonous* (I), *Web* (I)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 15 (–5), **Resolute** 7 (+3), **Strong** 9 (+1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (novice)		
Weapons Accurate	Bite 3, poison 2 for 2 turns		
Armor	None		
Defense	–5		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	None, but their nets may contain interesting objects from earlier victims (value: 1 thaler per tricklesting)		
Shadow	Greenish gray, like the beard lichens of the forest (corruption: 2)		

Tactics: The tricklesting uses its nets to capture prey animals, then dances around the target to flank it and kill it with bites. As the first one goes down, it continues to the next, and the next...

Predators

Category: Beasts

DAVOKAR IS TEEMING with life, which of course is the primary reason why the barbarians choose to endure its perilous environment. However, accompanying the prey animals are a multitude of predators – beasts that often find themselves transformed into victims in the claws of trolls, abominations and others who happen to be larger than them.

The barbarians have developed a culinary culture that makes them happy to reject a tender deer loin in favor of meat carved from predators – the more dangerous the predator, the finer the meal. It is, for example, said that High Chieftain Maiestikar refused to see anything but Hunger Wolves and Aboars on his plate.

MARE CAT			
Race	Beast		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Natural Weapon* (II), *Poisonous* (I)		
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 15 (–5), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (novice)		
Weapons Accurate	Bite 4 (short), poison 2 for 2 turns		
Armor	None		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	4
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Darkish green (corruption: 4)		
Tactics: The mare cats sneak up on their targets to surprise them, then move during the combat to keep the Advantage by flanking the victims.			

BAIAGORN			
Race	Beast		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Natural weapon* (I), *Robust* (I)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	*Berserker* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Claws 8 (short)		
Armor	Bear fur 4		
Defense	+7		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Green as last year's pine needles (corruption: 0)		
Tactics: A calm baiagorn is a careful creature, but if agitated or wounded it transforms into a roaring, foaming storm of claws that attacks its closest enemy or prey.			

MARE CAT

The Mare Cat is justifiably hated and feared in villages along the southern border of Davokar. They roam around in groups of around ten individuals and attack at night by squeezing through cracks in the walls or by tunneling under them. Unlike other feline predators, such as the huge Kotka or the Fey Beast, the furless mare cat is armed with a grievous venom secreted from glands above the fangs – a potent and highly concentrated toxin that commands a high price where it can be purchased.

Lonely, outcast specimens have been sighted as far south as in Redina, but the mare cat is essentially a forest predator and the biggest populations outside Davokar can be found in the woods of Seragon and Mervidun.

BAIAGORN

The bear-like baiagorn is not very big, nor very strong but is instead one of the most ferocious fighters of the woods. Typically it wanders alone but is not afraid to attack prey animals that are significantly bigger than itself; it never runs from danger and thanks to its hot temper it often emerges victorious from even the toughest fight.

The Baiaga clan, which has taken its name from these hot-headed bear beasts, has developed a method for taming baiagorns and teaching them some level of control. Paired with a skilled human fighter a baiagorn can be most effective – the beast attacks and absorbs the first hits while the barbarian hangs back waiting for the enemy to expose a weak spot. But a lone bear is hardly enough to pose a threat to a skilled warrior; for that a she-bear with a handful of yearlings is probably needed.

ABOAR

Wild boars are not a rare sight for travelers in Davokar, especially not out east in the territory of clan Vajvod where they are hunted for meat and tusks. It is also the vajvods who have fostered the tradition of once a year, during winter when the snow makes tracking an easy task, sending a group of select warriors deep into Davokar, hunting the Aboar.

This mythical giant swine is said to be related to the liege trolls and even outshines them when it comes to both cleverness and brutality. Only on a couple of occasions have there been credible reports of villages, outposts or travelers that have been attacked by an aboar – maybe because all potential witnesses have died in other attacks. On the other hand, it is far from unusual to hear farmers and others who work close to Davokar tell of strange happenings; occasions when they all of a sudden have found themselves being watched by some staring aboar, standing still at the forest edge or somewhere out on their farmlands. And none of the storytellers have the slightest doubt that a calculating and rational intellect hides behind the monstrous hog's wrinkled forehead.

ABOAR			
Race	Beast		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Armored* (II), *Natural weapon* (II), *Robust* (III)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 11 (–1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 9 (+1)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (adept)		
Weapons Strong	Tusks 10 (short)		
Armor	Swine skin 7		
Defense	+1		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Deep red, with faint streaks of rust in the red (corruption: 3)		
Tactics: The Aboar uses diversion attacks to try to scare the enemy away from its territory; if that fails the giant boar trusts that its tusks, reflexes and thick hide are enough to plow down any aggressor.			

Reptiles

Category: Beasts

THE QUESTION of whether or not there are dragons in Davokar is much debated. Some pundits claim that barbarian legends, reports from deep-reaching expeditions and, not least, details in Symbaroum's architecture prove that dragons are a reality. On the other hand, their opponents argue that the barbarian tales really are about lindworms, that all self-professed witnesses have lost their minds and that any dragon-like details on the ruins of Symbaroum can hardly be taken as evidence since similar motifs could be seen in Alberetor without any real dragons to inspire the artists.

The debate will likely continue and for the time being the Ambrian artists have smaller and more beastly reptiles to use as models for their dragon motifs. And there are plenty of them around, in the form of serpents and lizards and not least the turtles dwelling in the region's waterways. Many of the reptiles are venomous and almost all of them have been singled out as embodiments of Darvokar's darkness by the Church of Prios – a circumstance explained by First Father Jeseebegai as related to the fact that they are especially sensitive to the natural corruption permeating the grounds and waters of the forest.

KANARAN

Up to six paces long, the serpent called Kanaran or Restrictor specializes in attacking humanoids, and especially humans. It prefers to attack sleeping victims and has the ability to strangle and slither away with its prey so quietly that any companions of the victim never wake up – making for great cautionary tales to be told in combination with the suggestion never to be without a night watch while journeying in Davokar.

But the kanaran can also be a real threat to humans who are awake. Entwined by the serpent, hindered from using arms and weapons, the victim has no chance to defend itself and is soon strangled to death. Even worse is that the sly snake can maneuver a tangled victim to protect itself from others who try to rob it of its meal.

LINDWORM

They are few and far between, the Ambrians who can claim to have met or fought a Lindworm and lived to tell about it. They have neither wings nor legs but are said to share some traits with the fabled dragons, in that they are both cunning and capable of utilizing mystical powers. Indeed, the stories show some variations, which could be interpreted as evidence that individual specimens differ from each other in terms of both intelligence and magical abilities.

A widely renowned, if still unconfirmed, example of the intelligent kind is the serpent who is said to act as something of a spiritual guide for the northern clan Gaoia. Chieftain Rábaiamon as well as the keeper of the clan maintain that their decisions are guided by an elderly and infinitely wise lindworm called Grandfather Lint. But despite a handful of visits with promises of increasingly lavish compensation, the representatives of Ordo Magica have been denied a meeting with the oracle – a fact which has made the more skeptical among the wizards question the existence of the serpent.

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and under moss and roots, under the trails of crawlers and wrigglers, there are caverns basking in the gloom of the underworld; there thrive implings and the bone pale; there the blight grows on rocky walls and abominable shells; there the weepers walk in the Halls of a Thousand Tears, round and round a well about to overflow ..."

KANARAN			
Race	Reptiles		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Armored* (III)		
Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 16 (−6), **Discreet** 11 (−1), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 14 (−4), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 10 (0), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (master), *Exceptionally Cunning* (novice), *Exceptionally Quick* (novice), *Strangler* (novice)		
Weapons –	None		
Armor	Snake skin 4		
Defense	−4		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Bright green, like a swaying tree crown during high summer (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The kanaran sneaks up on solitary victims and strangles them. Desperate snakes can attack an individual traveling with a group and then use the target as a shield during the attack; in such cases the kanaran usually strangles the whole company before it starts to feed.

LINDWORM			
Race	Reptiles		
Resistance	Strong		
Traits	*Armored* (III), *Enthrall* (III), *Long-lived, Robust* (III)		
Accurate 7 (+3), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 11 (−1), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 15 (−5), **Strong** 13 (−3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (master), *Natural Warrior* (master)		
Weapons Strong	Bite 14 (short), or 2 attacks at the same target with damage 12 and 8		
Armor	Scales 8		
Defense	+4		
Toughness	13	**Pain Threshold**	7
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Emerald green, like the leaves on an ancient oak, hypnotically rustling in the summer breeze (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The lindworm is old and sly and will not fight if it knows it cannot win, or if there is nothing to gain. It prefers to enthrall its victims to learn about them, thereby finding out which one is the strongest. After that, the serpent is not afraid to let its fangs end the discussion.

Winged Creatures

Category: Beasts

THE SOUND OF FLAPPING WINGS means very different things depending on where in Davokar you are. In the outskirts the tree tops are full of beautiful and colorful songbirds, also appreciated for their eggs and tender meat. Further in you have to be very careful not to end up as a pre-chewed piece of meat in the mouth of some tiny monster hatched from the aforementioned egg.

And it is not only various monstrous bird beasts that you have to watch out for. Just as there are a number of oversized amphibians and spiders in Davokar, the forest also contains a variety of winged insects large enough to bite the head off both humans and ogres. According to some legends, nuisances like the Dragon Fly and the butterfly-like Swarmer were actually created by the magicians of Symbaroum. But the official position of both Ordo Magica and the Sun Church is instead that such creatures have developed from ordinary insects because of long-term exposure to the corrupt nature of Davokar. Regardless of which theory is correct, there are good reasons for travelers with experience from journeys in Davokar to feel sick when hearing fluttering wings, even long after they have returned from their forest expeditions.

They may be small and harmless one by one, but to survive an encounter with a swarm of violings is not easily done.

VIOLING

Huge flocks of the large crow bird known as the Violing or the Smirch roam Davokar, and can also be seen across the lowlands and the mountains. Such a flock can often be heard from a distance, where they sit in the tree tops screeching to each other. Many fortune-hunters have testified about attacks from rage trolls preceded by shrieking violings; that the bellowing of the trolls followed as the birds went silent. It is also said that the witches can foretell where a battle or feud will take place by reading the cawing of the flocks, as if the birds had the ability to predict upcoming outbreaks of violence. Maybe it is as some have claimed: that a violing is born when a normal crow has been ignorant enough to hack meat from a corrupt abomination...

And it is not only the screeching of the flocks which should be read as a bad omen; the same goes for their silence. Sometimes the violings decide to hunt for living prey and when that happens the wanderer gets no warning except for the grave-like silence which occurs when the tree tops are filled with motionless, dark shapes that watch the victims approach with blood red eyes. Other tales tell of instances where a number of flocks have joined together and attacked larger settlements on the lowlands. Blackmoor was only a couple of years ago victimized by such an attack. Eyewitnesses maintain that the whole sky over Thistle Hold grew black with thousands of violings who for a few heartbeats danced in the air before moving to strike.

DRAGON FLY

The treacherously beautiful dragon fly is probably the most devious slayer of the woods. Fully grown it is large as a well-built human and its jaws, full of needle-sharp teeth, can be opened wide enough to devour a goblin whole. Its two wing pairs emit a soft humming sound which most often is concealed by the rustling of leaves, so the inattentive may happen to come very close to the hovering hunter before discovering it. By then it is often too late, since the lighting fast attacks and retreats of the dragon fly can exhaust even the sturdiest of warriors.

The person who is about to venture into Davokar for the first time and who is wise enough to ask for advice always gets the same warning: what seems to be a cry for help can in fact be the alluring call of a hunter. There are numerous creatures in Davokar that make use of this technique, one of those being the dragon fly – they can alter their voice to impersonate a human child, crying and begging for help. However, they have not mastered the ability to pronounce human words, so in their case you only have to be careful of wordless moans.

VIOLING			
Race	Winged creatures		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Swarm* (I), *Wings* (I)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 15 (–5), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 9 (+1), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	*Natural Warrior* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Beak 3, 2 attacks against the same target		
Armor	None		
Defense	–5		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Blackish green, like tar bobbing on the surface of a pond (corruption: 6)		

Tactics: The violings swarm around their target, hacking at it with their beaks until it falls or retreating if the swarm thins out. When multiple swarms gather, they usually team up to attack the same victim.

DRAGON FLY			
Race	Winged creatures		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Natural weapon* (II), *Wings* (III)		
Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 5 (+5), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 9 (+1)			
Abilities	*Natural Warrior* (master)		
Weapons Accurate	Fangs 8, 2 attacks against the same target		
Armor	None		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Shimmering green (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The dragon fly makes use of its excellent flying ability, sweeping past the target, biting it, then continuing to fly out of range of any counter-attacks. It is not very smart, but shrewd enough to attack persons with ranged weapons first.

BLIGHT BORN HUMAN			
Race	Abomination (once human)		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Acidic blood* (I), *Natural weapon* (I), *Robust* (I)		
Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Berserker* (novice), *Natural Warrior* (novice)		
Weapons Accurate	Claws 9 (short)		
Armor	Leather apron 4 (Impeding)		
Defense	+9, corrosive blood 3 for 3 turns		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	Tools and items related to its former occupation, 1D10 ortegs		
Shadow	Fully corroded copper (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: The abomination closes in on its victim and attacks with a passionate hunger.			

BLIGHT BORN ELK			
Race	Abomination (once beast)		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Corrupting Attack* (I), *Natural Weapon* (II), *Robust* (II)		
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (adept), *Natural Warrior* (novice)		
Weapons Strong	Antlers 10, +1D4 in temporary corruption.		
Armor	Elk Hide 3		
Defense	0		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Brownish black, like the hide of a decaying animal corpse (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: None. The scent of living bodies drives the blight beast to attack, muzzle foaming with corruption.			

Abomination **Category:** Abomination

THE AMBRIANS use the term Abomination for what the barbarians call Blight Beasts – creatures in some way associated with the corrupt darkness of Davokar. It is unclear if all abominations are related or if it would be more accurate to speak of different kinds of abominations, but both Ordo Magica and the Twilight Friars do all in their power to learn more about the phenomenon.

In any case, the term covers a varied crowd of beings that seem to have one trait in common: they want to hurt humans; they wish for humans to ache, to suffer, preferably to die. And they wish this with such a passion that nothing else matters. You cannot reason with an abomination, nor compromise with or frighten them; the abomination appears to live for the destruction of mankind, one individual at a time, and it does not hesitate to destroy anything or anyone standing in the way.

BLIGHT BORN

Exactly when it happens is under debate, but at some point it seems as if persons or creatures plagued by corruption lose themselves to the disease. When it has gone that far, the physical appearance of the individual starts to transform. One who has browsed the book Hordes of the Eternal Night, written and illustrated by the Black Cloak Almagast, have seen widely different examples of bodily stigmata: extreme dehydration; oozing blisters; horn-like and tail-like outgrowths; bleeding mucosal membranes; withered or twisted limbs; blackened or albino-pale skin; furry hair growth on humans and loss of fur on animals. And when it comes to personality and temper the transformation is absolute – everything that remains is destructive: envy, anger, hunger, hubris and hatred.

Blight born animals and beasts wander alone in the wilds, killing everything that comes in their way, growing bigger and stronger and spreading corruption through bites and scratches. Human abominations seem to hold on to some of their intellectual capacity and can linger in populated areas if they are careful. They keep in hiding, use infected persons as guards and couriers, and can with time surround themselves with a whole court of cultists obeying their every command. Sometimes, as in the notorious case of the widow baroness of the House Elsbet, it can take years before the source of corruption is revealed.

BLIGHT BORN ABOAR			
Race	Abomination (once beast)		
Resistance	Strong		
Traits	*Acidic Attack* (II), *Acidic Blood* (III), *Armored* (III), *Natural Weapon* (III), *Robust* (III)		
Accurate 7 (+3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (−3), **Resolute** 11 (−1), **Strong** 15 (−5), **Vigilant** 9 (+1)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (adept)		
Weapons Strong	Tusks 11 (long), +1D6 temporary corruption		
Armor	Swine skin 8		
Defense	+1		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	None		
Shadow	A purple-black mass that bleeds black tears of the deepest corruption (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: The blight-stricken Aboar snorts with longing to bury its tusks into warm flesh, and it never hesitates.			

PRIMAL BLIGHT BEAST			
Race	Abomination		
Resistance	Mighty		
Traits	*Acidic Blood* (III), *Armored* (III), *Corrupting Attack* (III), *Natural Weapon* (III), *Regeneration* (III), *Robust* (III)		
Discreet 5 (+5), **Quick** 11 (−1), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Strong** 18 (−8), **Accurate** 13 (−3), **Vigilant** 10 (0), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 7 (+3)			
Abilities	*Berserker* (master), *Exceptionally Strong* (master), *Iron Fist* (master), *Natural Warrior* (master)		
Weapons Strong	Claws 20 (long), or two attacks against the same target with damage 18 and 14, +1D8 in temporary corruption.		
Armor	Blight Hardened Flesh 10, regenerates 4 *Toughness*/turn		
Defense	+3		
Toughness	18	**Pain Threshold**	9
Shadow	The deepest black, a light-consuming stain on the midnight sky (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: None. Its hatred towards all things living drives it to act without tactical concern – all that matters is destruction.			

PRIMAL BLIGHT BEAST

However far the corruption has gone, the blight born are still recognizable for what they once were – human, ogre, troll or mare cat. But there are also scarce reports describing something else; something worse and more unnatural; creatures so alien and so hateful that they appear to embody the exact opposite of nature. It is speculated as to whether or not these primal horrors truly exist and if they in that case could be embodiments of the corruption itself; personifications of the hunger and the hatred and the wrath.

Among the barbarians there is a long list of legends about Primal Blight Beasts and their origins. Most of them describe the abominations as born out of the marrow of something called the World Serpent, a mystical beast that according to some tales created Symbaroum. Others state that it was slain by Symbaroum's first emperor or that it still bides its time somewhere under the high seat of Symbar. A totally different take on the origins of the primal horrors, is that they appear spontaneously in places where the corruption is at its strongest – in the ruins brooding on the darkest secrets, where puddles of acidic magic remain from the baneful practices of Symbaroum. Whatever the truth may be, both Ambrians and barbarians can count themselves lucky that the primal horrors prefer the dark depth of the forest instead of the sundrenched lowlands.

Concerning Abominations and the Underworld

Countless contradictory tales claim to relate the truth about the origin of abominations. Some maintain that they represent an ancient race which has been around since long before the Elder Folks saw the light of day. Others claim that they have been created or bred by elves or men, by accident or knowingly and with some malicious intent.

Among the Elder Folks a common notion seems to be that the origin of abominations is directly linked to the fall of Symbaroum. One must of course bear in mind that those stories most often reach Ambrians via the throats of barbarians or goblins. But that being said, many of these old tales describe how the warlocks and alchemists of Symbaroum did horrible experiments, utilizing the supposed Pure Magic to upset the natural order, thereby giving rise to the abominations.

True or not true, a majority of the age-old legends also refer to something which is sometimes called the Underworld, sometimes Underhill, sometimes the Abyss. Supposedly there is a whole world beneath the roots of Davokar, filled with tunnels, sunken ruins, lakes of acidified magic and far worse phenomena than that. And there are actually some Ambrian explorers who claim to have wandered through this hidden realm, often after having descended into one sinkhole or another. But even if the authorities at Ordo Magica allow that there may exist local underground complexes, there is no one who would agree that the entire forest can be undermined by a vast "Underworld". As Seldonio himself once put it: "Ludicrous, my dear Baron, what you claim is pure nonsense!"

Undead

Category: Undead

AMBRIANS ARE NOT unaware of the fact that what has died is not necessarily gone – The Great War meant two decades of battles against the Dark Lords' undead and fettered spirits. But the region north of the Titans has proved to exceed their previous experiences, in terms of darkness and evil as well as when it comes to fertility and vitality.

The undead are not automatically hostile towards the living, though they tend to be irritable and prone to jealous rage. Some undead are even said to be able to communicate with the living, and the Sun Church has openly accused Ordo Magica of having a heretical branch specialized in hunting down and conversing with the dead. The members of the Order deny it emphatically but Seldonio has also publicly and humorously thanked the First Father for the tip – if it was possible to communicate with lingering spirits of those who were alive during the days of Symbaroum it could very well lead to vital insights and the revival of old truths regarding the true nature of magic.

FROSTLIGHT

As night falls over Davokar's border regions the frostlights come floating through the air: small shapeless fields of flickering, pale blue light hunting for the warmth of the living. At times they come drifting in great crowds that travel unhindered by walls and stockades.

The barbarians claim that the frostlights are the souls of stillborn children desperately searching for closeness, and that they do not realize that their touch is harmful. An event which supports that belief occurred in Yndaros the other year, as the previously rare frostlight victims multiplied after an outbreak of the Pale Sickness which meant that many pregnancies were terminated prematurely.

DRAGOUL

That the dead can be resurrected is nothing new to the Ambrians, who met such creatures by the thousands in the Great War. With dark mystical powers the Dark Lords awakened fallen warriors to life and forced them to battle their former allies.

The Ambrians still use the Dark Lords' name for these walking dead, Dragouls, despite the fact that the deadwalkers of the Promised Land differ from the former horror. During The Great War, Pansars and theurgs met the undead on the battlefield, always awakened by some malicious wielder of mystical powers. But nowadays it seems as if they can appear just about anywhere, as soon as someone has died – a sick nobleman in his bed, a victim of

FROST LIGHT			
Race	Spirit		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Alternative damage* (I), *Spirit form* (I)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 15 (–5), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Touch of death 3, ignores armor, damages *Strong*		
Armor	None, half damage from normal weapons		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	—
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Ashen gray with black flakes (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: The frost lights are drawn to heat and suck the strength out of anyone they touch. They do not make any tactical considerations in their hunt for bodily warmth and comfort.			

DRAGOUL			
Race	Undead		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Undead* (I)		
Accurate 9 (+1), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (adept), *Shield Fighter* (novice)		
Weapons Strong	Rusty sword 7		
Armor	Studded leather 2 (impeding)		
Defense	0 (shield)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	—
Equipment	1D10 ortegs		
Shadow	Yellowish gray like dead skin, with dark spots that grow as the undead body slowly rots (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: The undead ventures forth according to the will of its creator or on its own, always hunting for warm flesh and fresh blood.			

armed robbery in some city ally or a group of newly fallen clan warriors under the tree tops of Davokar.

Thankfully, these horrible occurrences are so far rare, but the fact that they exist at all has made some theurgs loudly herald that the end of the world is near. For the barbarians, the dragouls are a new kind of horror, and therefore in some ways more terrifying than the abominations they know and have learned to combat. And since the dragouls appeared shortly after the first Ambrian intrusions into Davokar, the southerners have been given the blame for this unwelcome challenge in an already dangerous life in the woods.

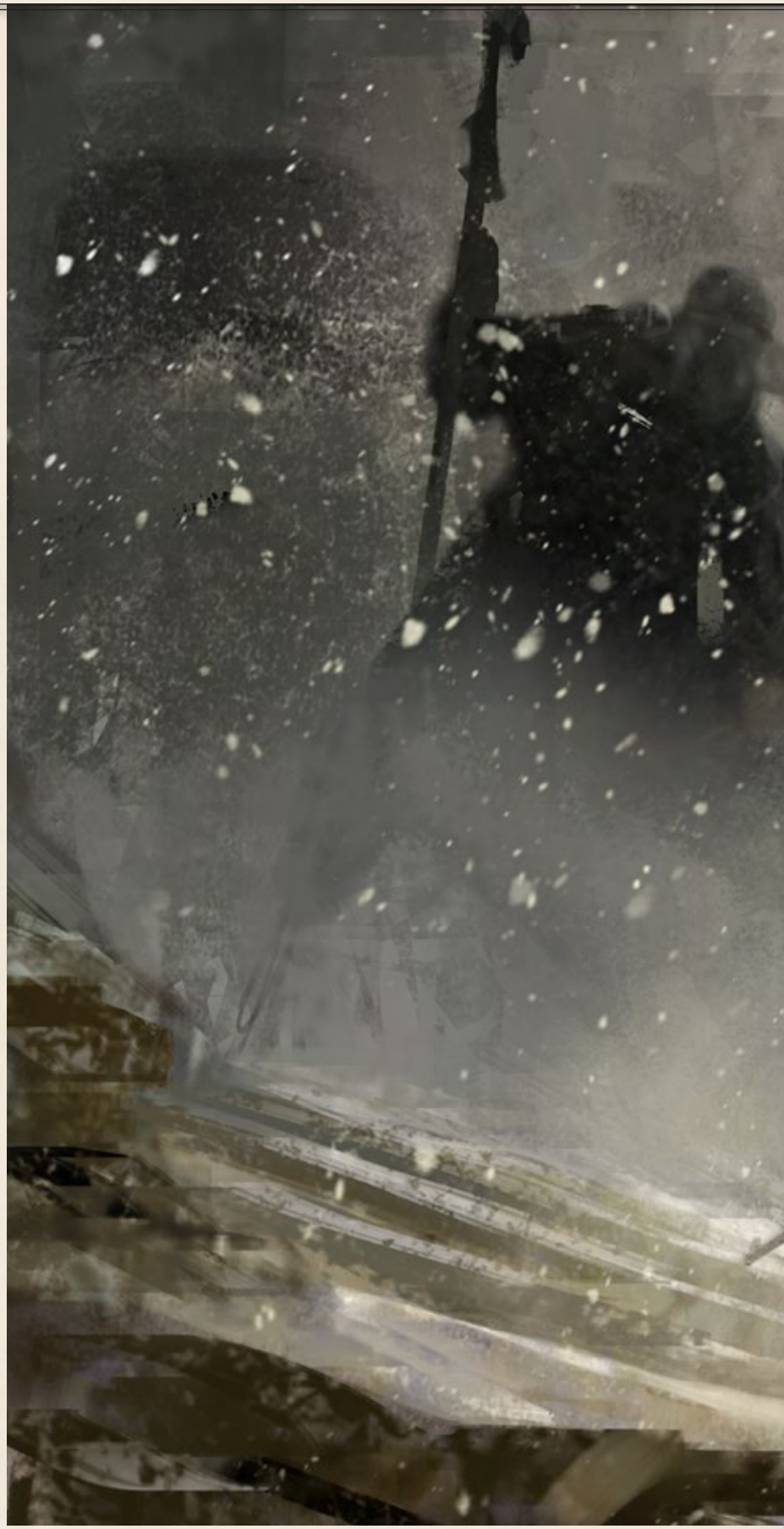
NECROMAGE

A Necromage is born when a sorcerer is killed and not buried in the proper manner, at least if you are to judge by the myths of old Symbaroum. However they arise, many a barbarian and Ambrian explorer can testify to the existence of this spectral being, often in a voice trembling with fear.

The ethereal, half transparent and shapeshifting necromages seem to have a fondness for transforming into a colorless mirror-image of the one they meet. It is said that they primarily are hunting for company; that they try to lure travelers into their

NECROMAGE			
Race	Spirit		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Alternative damage* (III), *Spirit form* (III), *Terrify* (II)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 15 (–5), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Mystical power* (*Bend will*, adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Wraith claws 5, ignores armor, damages Resolute		
Armor	None, only mystical powers and magical weapons are harmful, only with half damage		
Defense	–3		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	—
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Dark gray, like thunderclouds in a cold night sky (thoroughly corrupt)		

Tactics: The necromage calls on its victims by bending their will, follows up by making them terrified and finishes them off with its claws when they are helpless.



lairs hoping for a brief time of companionship, until it grows tired and consumes the soul of the guest. There are other tales describing what happens when the enticement fails, that the necromage attacks, driving the victim insane with death cries before slicing flesh and spirit alike to shreds with its claws.

CRYPTWALKER

The ruins of Symbaroum are spread far and wide and burial grounds, tombs and mausoleums can be found everywhere in Davokar. What many treasure-hunters realize all too late is that the graves are often haunted by Cryptwalkers – shades that linger in their rotting or embalmed bodies and who react with wrath to every desecrating intrusion.

There are also examples of cryptwalkers that have left their tombs and wandered straight into populated areas, either because they have gone astray or in the hunt for some treasure-hunter who has plundered their resting place. In Year 15 such a tragedy took place in Kastor – more than a hundred people died when something described as a "King Wraith" caught up to a grave robber in the marketplace, at the time of the harvest feast.

CRYPTWALKER	
Race	Spirit
Resistance	Strong
Traits	*Gravely cold* (III), *Manifestation* (III), *Spirit form* (III)
Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 11 (–1), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 9 (+1)	
Abilities	*Iron Fist* (master), *Twin Attack* (master)
Weapons Strong	2 swords 7/6 (balanced), two attacks against the same target
Armor	None, only mystical powers and magical weapons are harmful, only with half damage
Defense	–3 (two weapons)
Toughness	15 **Pain Threshold** —
Equipment	Two wraith blades (quality: Balanced)
Shadow	Like a clear night sky, with faint light that does nothing but make the dark seem blacker (thoroughly corrupt)
Tactics: The cryptwalker assumes that the enemy will have a hard time damaging it, until proven otherwise. Either way it uses its gravely cold power to paralyze enemies, then finishes them off with the swords.	

The land you are leaving is barren and dead, ravaged by dark magic. Before you lies Ambria with its rampant rivers, bountiful forests and fertile soils, promising well-earned rest for weary souls. But will it deliver? The region you are headed for is ancient. Under the sublime surface, age-old conflicts still run hot and the northbound refugees gush out over the landscape like lamp oil over a smoldering hearth.

A wintry breeze follows you and your companions through the Titans, the mountain range separating the dead Alberetor in the south from Ambria up north. It is still far from certain that you will reach your destination. Many of your exiled brothers and sisters have perished on the way, from hunger or exhaustion or in the jaws of predators roaming the wilds. And for you there is yet another cause for concern – some of your companions claim to hear a whispering voice in the gusts of snowy mountain air!

ADVENTURE:

THE PROMISED LAND

The Promised Land

WELCOME TO THE PROMISED LAND, the tutorial adventure for Symbaroum. Our aim is that it should provide a balanced introduction to the rules and setting of Symbaroum, suitable for experienced role-players and beginners alike. The adventure deals with a perilous journey through the Titans. The player characters can be Ambrians about to make their first contact with Queen Korinthia's new realm or travelers from the north who so far have kept some distance to the newly established civilization. In that way none of them know much more about Ambria than what is detailed in the first section of this book.

THIS INITIAL CHAPTER includes a narrative tutorial meant to illustrate how the communication between a player and the Game Master may flow during two sequences of play. The text can be read by both players and Game Masters, but it is primarily written for the latter as it is based on scenes from this adventure. Hence, the players should not be given access to the text before their characters have made it through the mountain pass.

After the narrative tutorial, nine premade characters are presented, for the players to copy or use as inspiration when filling out their character sheets. Among them there are both individuals who originate from the Davokar region, and some who have never set foot north of the Titans.

The adventure that follows after the premade characters is divided into three chapters, in turn broken up into a number of scenes. For the benefit of inexperienced Game Masters, the Promised Land has been constructed as a linear story with scenes that follow each other like pearls on a string – something which delimits the options of the player characters and thereby makes the task of the Game Master less complicated. However, role-players are of an unruly breed and not easily controlled. Naturally, the player characters may act in a way which is not covered by the manuscript, in which case the Game Master must be prepared to improvise and gently guide them back to the main path of the adventure.

The chapters of the Promised Land may be summarized as follows:

CHAPTER 1: ONWARDS TO YNDAROS

When the game begins, the player characters are held up south of the Titans, in a caravan camp full of stragglers looking for traveling companions to accompany them on the journey over the mountains. The chapter introduces the mood of the setting as well as the basic rules of combat. Furthermore, the player characters are given a reason for why they are leaving the south and a hint of what they are headed for: the ample fields and swaying forests of Ambria.

CHAPTER 2: IN THE COMPANY OF THIEVES

Chapter 2 is focused on teaching the rules of problem-solving. The players will also receive a deeper understanding of the setting, not least of

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and king upon king sent his people to die, in wave upon wave over rolling plains; men and women on whose broken hulls, an imposing realm was built. Such was the foundation of Symbaroum: built with flesh and blood."

the hardships associated with traveling: newly made player characters are competent but far from full-fledged heroes who can do whatever they like without risking their lives. The world will prove to be bigger and darker than they imagine, despite previous encounters with the hordes of darkness.

CHAPTER 3: THE TOLL OF THE MOUNTAINS

In Chapter 3 the adventure reaches its climax, with scenes where the rules of combat and problem-solving are mixed with pure roleplaying. The player characters are harshly greeted by the north, as age-old conflicts meet up with them on the mountain road. Ambria is both beautiful and fertile, especially compared to the dead lands they have left behind. But it is nonetheless wise to keep your hand close to the hilt of your sword.

It is revealed that two of the player characters' traveling companions have angered the Iron Pact by pillaging ruins in Davokar. The elves are far from delighted. In fact, they are prepared to slaughter a whole caravan of innocents to make the plunderers pay and to stop the blight from spreading. What slumbers in the murky deep of Davokar must not be awakened!

Narrative Tutorial

THE RULES OF SYMBAROUM are easy to use once you have learned how they operate. Basically, the player character has eight attributes with a value between 5 and 15. When faced with a challenge in the game world, the player must roll a twenty sided dice (D20). In order to overcome the challenge the dice must land on a figure which is equal to or lower than the player character's value in one of the attributes. For instance, if the character tries to do something which requires him to be quiet or cautious the attribute *Discreet* is used; if he or she searches for something or is on his guard then *Vigilant* is the active attribute.

However, there are two aspects that add to the complexity. First the Abilities, which represent the particular skills of a player character. Abilities sometimes open up the possibility for the player to use another attribute than the one which seems natural in a certain situation. A common example occurs when it is time for combat. In order for the player character to hit an opponent with his weapon, the player normally rolls the die against the attribute *Accurate*. But if the character, for example, masters the ability called *Iron Fist* he can choose to roll against *Strong* instead. In the same way, the ability *Feint* makes it possible to role against the character's value in *Discreet* and the ability *Dominate* against the value in *Persuasive*. To be sure of what applies in different situations both the player and the Game Master must study and learn how the various abilities operate.

The other complication has to do with the fact that many challenges become easier or harder depending on who or what the character interacts with. Sneaking past a guard is for instance easier or harder depending on how *Vigilant* the guard is. And to hit an enemy with a sword can be more or less difficult depending on how *Quick* the opponent is. Rule-wise this is achieved by modifying the value that the player must roll against, most often in a way which is directly related to the attribute values of the opponent. In concrete terms: If the aforementioned guard has the mediocre value of 10 in *Vigilant*, no modification is made (±0); if the guard is very absentminded and only has 5 in *Vigilant*, the player gets to add 5 (+5) to the attribute he must roll against; and should the guard be so alert that he has 15 in *Vigilant* the player must subtract 5 (–5) from the value he must roll against with the D20.

Now, let us accompany the ogre Grumpa, the example character in the Core Book, as she tries to convince the caravan master Argasto that she should be invited to tag along on the journey over the Titans (see page 245). She is facing a guard, dressed in a scale mail armor and carrying sword and shield. Grumpa is of course equipped with her leather apron and has armed herself with a long staff.

Relocating the scenario

The basic premise of the adventure – the journey from Alberetor to Yndaros – is pointless if the player characters are already in Ambria. If that is the case, some changes must be made, but it is still possible to keep the core of the adventure relatively intact.

Tentatively the characters could instead depart from Yndaros, with Karvosti or Thistle Hold as the final destination. The mountain pass could be made into a lengthy valley and the snowstorm in Chapter 3 into heavy rains or a hailstorm. What to make of Chapters 1 and 2 is less evident; the theft of the Sun Stone is less alarming if it does not threaten the caravan. But if one or more characters are tasked with bringing the stone from an Ordo Magica chapter to the destination, some of the narrative pressure still applies and the scenes can run as intended. Chapter 3, which is based on the Iron Pact hunting abominations, is relevant no matter where in Ambria or Davokar the characters may be.

First the turn order must be determined – that is, which of the two acts first – which is normally decided by looking at the opponent's value in *Quick*. In this case both combatants have 10 in *Quick*, in which case the order is instead determined by the value in *Vigilant*. Grumpa has 9 in *Vigilant*, the guard 11. Hence, the latter is first to act.

However, the first turn differs somewhat from those to come. Grumpa wields a weapon with the quality Long, which means that she first of all gets to make a Free Attack on the guard. The Game Master tells Grumpa's player to role a die against *Accurate*, modified by the opponents *Defense* which is +1. The player picks up a D20 and will try to get a result which is under or equal to 11 (*Accurate* 10, modified by the enemy's *Defense* +1). The player rolls 14: the guard deflects the staff with his shield and it hits the ground. Time for the adversary to retaliate!

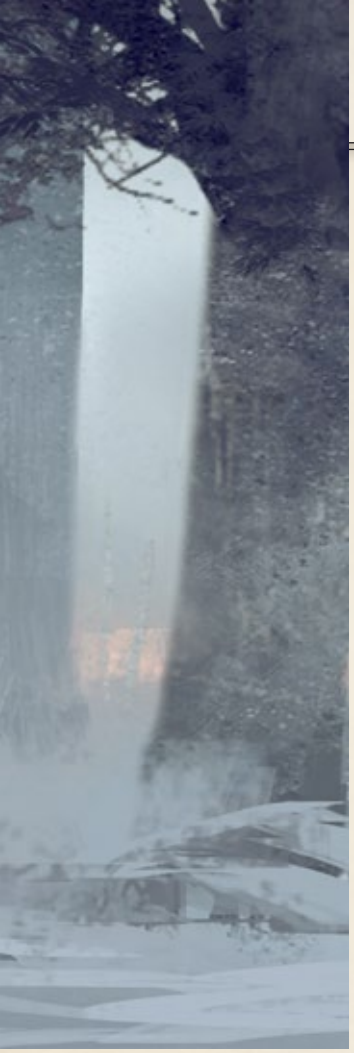
The Game Master tells Grumpa's player to roll a die against her value in *Defense*, but modified by the enemy's *Accurate* which is 13 and therefore gives a modification of –3. Ouch, the stout ogre is in trouble since she only has 6 in *Defense*. Because of the skilled opponent the player must roll under or equal to 3 to avoid being hit (*Defense* 6, modified by the enemy's *Accurate* –3). The die lands on 7 and Grumpa fails to parry the swing. But that does not necessarily mean that she gets injured...

The Game Master says that the guard's sword deals 4 in damage. Luckily Grumpa is well prepared to handle that – she has the trait *Robust* which lets her ignore 1D4 damage each time she is hit, and she also has her apron that also protects for 1D4. Grumpa's player rolls 1 on the first D4 and 4 on the second. When added together (1+4=5) and the result has been subtracted from the damage of 4 it shows that Grumpa is totally unharmed (damage 4, minus Grumpa's Armor 5 = less than 1). And now it is her time to act!

Instead of going for another swing with the staff the player wants Grumpa to make use of the mystical power *Confusion*. The Game Master says that a roll against *Resolute* has to be made, with a –2 modification; sure, the guard has 10 in *Resolute* (±0) but her *Armor* is impeding (–2). Hence, the player must roll under or equal to 13 (Grumpa's value in *Resolute*). The dice lands on 4 and the confusion takes effect, but two additional rolls must be made. First the player rolls 1D4 to determine how much temporary Corruption Grumpa is afflicted by – she rolls a 3 and makes a note of that on the character sheet. Second, the player rolls 1D6 to determine the

Concerning the ←

The arrow pointing leftwards and which is used in the formula for describing challenges means "modified by". Consequently, the formula *[Quick←Accurate]* means "*Quick* modified by (the opponent's) *Accurate*", a modification which can be either positive (+) or negative (–).



Attributes and Modifiers

Value	Modifier
5	+5
6	+4
7	+3
8	+2
9	+1
10	±0
11	–1
12	–2
13	–3
14	–4
15	–5

effect of the *Confusion* (see page 133). The outcome is a 2 which according to the power's description means that the opponent becomes temporarily paralyzed.

Next turn. This time around the length of Grumpa's weapon has no effect, but since the guard is paralyzed it still is the ogre's time to act. First the Game Master says that a roll against *Resolute* must be made (modification –2), to see if the *Confusion* will last for yet another turn. The die lands on 12 which means that she succeeds. With that done, the ogre lifts her staff into the air and bashes down on the enemy.

The guard may be stunned but he gets to defend himself just the same – the *Confusion* only makes him lose his active actions, not the reactive ones such as *Defense*. The Game Master says that the same terms apply as before: the player must roll an 11 or less with the D20. The die lands on a 6. A hit!

The Game Master tells the player of Grumpa that the scale mail armor of the guard absorbs 3 in damage. Grumpa's staff deals 1D6 in damage and the trait *Robust* makes it possible for the ogre to deal 1D4 of additional damage once each turn. Since the fight is to be ended at "first blood", the sum of the two die rolls must be more than 3 for Grumpa to be victorious. The player rolls the D4 and gets a 2. The tension is rising! The D6 lands on a 5. Hence, the total damage is 2+5=7, out of which 4 points (damage 7, minus the opponent's Armor 3) affects the *Toughness* of the guard – a great hit that sends the bold warrior staggering backwards.

Grumpa smiles smugly, looks at Argasto and mumbles: *"Sorry, I didn't mean to hit him that hard ..."*.

A MOMENT LATER...

Later on, Grumpa has been asked to find the thief who has stolen the caravan's vitally important artifact: the Sun Stone (see page 257). A traveling companion has helped her to track Keler to a ruined watermill but is afraid to escort her all the way – the capturing of the thief is a challenge that she must deal with on her own. Grumpa's player says that the ogre sneaks her way towards the ruin. The Game Master tells her to roll a die against *[Vigilant –3]*; consequently the die must land on a number less than or equal to 6 for Grumpa to succeed, since the ogre has the value 9 in *Vigilant*. The player rolls a 5, and the Game Master informs her that Grumpa notices a leghold trap hidden in her path under a thin layer of undergrowth.

After having sidestepped the trap Grumpa sneaks closer to the watermill ruin. It is located about 20 paces from the forest edge – precisely as far as the ogre can get in one turn by using both her actions for movement (see page 158). Seeing that Grumpa is really bad at moving quietly (value 5 in *Discreet*), the player decides to make a run for it. The Game Master says that it is time for a roll against *[Discreet←Vigilant]* to determine if the person or persons inside the ruin take notice of the onrushing ogre. That is an impossible challenge, since Grumpa only has 5 in *Discreet* and the thief Keler has 15 in *Vigilant*, meaning a modification of –5 (*Discreet* 5, modified by –5 = 0). But Grumpa still makes it to the wall of the ruin; Keler has spotted her but is taken by surprise and unable to react until the start of the next turn.

Just like in the fight against the caravan guard, the values in *Quick* are not enough to determine the turn order, but since the thief has 15 in *Vigilant* he may act first. He leans out through a hole in the ruin's wall and shoots down at Grumpa.

The Game Master tells the player to roll a die against *Defense* with a –2 modification, because Keler has 10 in *Accurate* and also an Advantage over her (see page 162). The player must roll 4 or under to avoid being hit by the crossbow bolt fired by Keler. The dice lands on an 8. The Game Master says that the bolt deals 7 in damage (5, +2 for the Advantage), after which the player rolls 2D4 to determine the value of Grumpa's Armor – one D4 for the leather apron, and one for the trait *Robust*. The result of the die rolls turns out to be 2+4=6. After having subtracted the sum from the damage (7–6=1), it is shown that the ogre takes one point in damage, which is noted on the character sheet before it is Grumpa's turn to act.

From up above she can hear Keler starting to reload the crossbow and how he desperately cries (in the voice of the Game Master): "You will regret this! The undead Mal-Rogan will find you and chop you to pieces. Not even death could beat him; you think you are a match for Mal-Rogan, the Master of Death!?" Since nothing else is stated in the adventure, the Game Master tells the player that it only takes one Movement Action to reach the top of the ladder and thereby Keler. Why hesitate!?

Grumpa storms up and the Game Master decides that the cowardly Keler throws the crossbow to the ground and raises his arms in the air. The ogre searches his clothes and finds the Sun Stone in a pocket inside the tunic. No die roll is required to find the stone, but the Game Master tells the player to roll a dice against *Vigilant* anyway, modified by –5. The player rolls a 12 which means that the ogre fails.

Hence, Grumpa continues to examine the thief's belongings without noticing the sounds from outside – sounds from the robbers that Mal-Rogan has sent to scout the watermill ruin and make sure that the coast is clear ...

Premade Characters

THE PROMISED LAND can be played with any kind of characters but it is balanced for the ones described below. The three Ambrians – Orlan, Bartolom and Ansel – are particularly suitable for new players, since none of them have been north of the Titans and know as little about Ambria as the players themselves. The barbarians Kvarek and Karla as well as the ogre Rageor, the changeling Niha and the goblin Fenya originate from the north but do not know much more about Ambria and Korinthia's rule than the newcomers.

Kvarek, barbarian mercenary

"What's in it for me?"

You have walked the path of steel from early childhood, as a member of the proud clan Jezora. But ever since your clan was annihilated by Ambrian forces a dozen years ago you have wandered alone – most likely as the only surviving Jezite. You have leased your weapon to the highest bidder, Ambrian or barbarian, but the constant warring has begun to eat at your soul. And you are plagued by a nagging conscience due to the fact that you survived when your brothers and sisters followed Chieftain Haloban into death. It is time to retire.

You are probably employed as a caravan guard, hoping that it will prove to be a low-risk job that lets you earn enough to eventually stop working and settle down somewhere close to the forest of Davokar. On the way south you may have befriended some or all of Rageor, Niha, Karla and Fenya.

KVAREK			
Race	Human (barbarian)		
Traits	*Contacts* (sellswords)		
Accurate 15, **Cunning** 9, **Discreet** 7, **Persuasive** 5, **Quick** 13, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 11, **Vigilant** 10			
Abilities	*Bodyguard* (novice), *Man-at-arms* (novice), *Shield Fighter* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Dagger 1D8 (short), Bow 1D8, Sword 1D10, Shield bash 1D4 (+chance to knock-down)		
Armor	Crow armor 1D8 (cumbersome)		
Defense	11 (shield)		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	Pipe and tobacco, dice set, camp equipment, weapon maintenance kit, 9 shillings		
Shadow	Blooming green (corruption: 0)		

Orlan of the House Daar, Pansar

"You have my word!"

You are the youngest son of a – besides you – extinct house of nobility. The estates and your relatives perished in The Great War; you were accepted into the ranks of the Queen's Pansars, thanks to your skills and your family name. After a time of service you have had enough of patrols and drills, and have resigned from the knights' guard in order to find a purpose in life, perhaps even the strength to rebuild your house from its ruined state.

You may very well have stayed behind in Alberetor as a member of the rearguard while the Queen and her people traveled over the mountains, possibly because you have a hard time leaving the tombs and lands of your family. Bartolom and Ansel can be old acquaintances of yours, maybe from the battlefield during the last clashes of The Great War.

ORLAN OF THE HOUSE DAAR			
Race	Human (Ambrian)		
Traits	*Privileged*		
Accurate 11, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 5, **Persuasive** 13, **Quick** 10, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 9			
Abilities	*Dominate* (novice), *Leader* (adept), *Two-handed force* (novice)		
Weapons Persuasive	Dagger 1D6 (short), Sword 1D8, Two-handed sword 1D12		
Armor	Fortified chainmail 1D8 (Impeding)		
Defense	6 (dodge) or 7 (shield)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	Pouch with soil from the family residence in the south, camp equipment, weapon maintenance kit, 1 thaler and 5 shillings		
Shadow	Gleaming silver (corruption: 0)		

Rageor, ogre berserker

"Annoy me not!"

Many years ago you came wandering through Davokar nameless and blank, and were taken in by a witch who taught you to speak and behave. She never gave you a name, aware that you do not need one – after all, you know who you are and that is enough. Instead the servant of the witch named you, with a nickname to suit your temperament. Since then you have been known as Rageor, and when the witch died of old age you left the forest behind.

There seems to be much to learn about the world. You may have ended up south of the Titans by chance ("What lies down south?"), or because you previously befriended Fenya, Karla or Kvarek and just tagged along. A thrilling alternative is that the witch who raised you may have been killed by Templars. If that is the case you may very well be hunted by both witches and Black Cloaks who wish to know more about what the witch was doing or why she died.

RAGEOR			
Race	Ogre		
Traits	*Long-lived, Pariah, Robust* (novice)		
Accurate 10, **Cunning** 9, **Discreet** 5, **Persuasive** 7, **Quick** 11, **Resolute** 13, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 10			
Abilities	*Berserker* (novice), *Twin Attack* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Dagger 1D6+1D4 (short), 2 swords 1D8+1D4		
Armor	Leather apron 1D4 (Impeding)		
Defense	8 (parry)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	Self-made flute that only plays in minor, 4 ortegs		
Shadow	Dark green like moss (corruption: 0)		

Ansel, theurg

"Begone, skeptic!"

You are a servant of the faith schooled in the Church of Prios, also a priest mage, one of few selected by Prios to be the light in the world. Your conviction may be unwavering, but your relationship to the Church is not: intrigues fester behind closed doors, sharp elbows and pure defamations are not uncommon in the struggle for positions in the Church hierarchy. You constantly struggle to determine what is the actual will of Prios and what is part of your superiors' schemes.

You are determined to stay a champion of the former and refuse to get dragged into the latter. You were probably one of those who stayed behind in Alberetor, by choice or on order, to look after some ancient temple to the Sun God. Now you have been called to close the temple gates for good and join your brothers and sisters up north. You are possibly familiar with Orlan and Bartolom, maybe after having served for a time in the same unit of Queen Korinthia's proud army.

ANSEL			
Race	Human (Ambrian)		
Traits	*Contacts* (the Sun Church)		
Accurate 13, **Cunning** 10, **Discreet** 5, **Persuasive** 15, **Quick** 7, **Resolute** 11, **Strong** 9, **Vigilant** 10			
Abilities	*Leader* (adept), *Theurgy* (novice), *Witch Hammer* (novice)		
Weapons Accurate	Dagger 1D6 (short), Blessed warhammer 1D8		
Armor	Blessed robe 1D4 (flexible)		
Defense	8 (shield)		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	Worn copy of the Lightbringer (the holy book of Prios), camp equipment, 1 thaler and 3 shillings		
Shadow	Shimmering gold, like the sun reflecting off a silver mirror (corruption: 0)		

Bartolom, Wizard of Ordo Magica

"Interesting, this must be scrutinized."

You are a novice in Ordo Magica, Ambria's biggest and most influential order of wizardry. When all others journeyed north you and your master stayed in Alberetor to study the dying earth, although you wanted nothing more than to tag along in search for the truth behind rumors about Davokar's herbs and the magic of barbarian witches. Now that your master is dead it is time to put that plan into action. The first step is to locate your old colleague, Master Vernam who is said to live in Thistle Hold.

The last thing your departed master asked of you was to bring the one true treasure of your tower to Grand Master Seldonio in Yndaros – the ancient artifact known as the Sun Stone. Once this is done you are free to do whatever you like, but you probably contemplate joining the chapter in Thistle Hold. You may be friends or acquainted with Orlan or Ansel.

BARTOLOM	
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Traits	*Privileged*
Accurate 10, **Cunning** 13, **Discreet** 5, **Persuasive** 10, **Quick** 11, **Resolute** 15, **Strong** 9, **Vigilant** 7	
Abilities	*Alchemy* (novice), *Beast Lore* (novice), *Brimstone Cascade* (novice), *Medicus* (novice), *Wizardry* (novice)

Weapons Accurate	Dagger 1D6 (short), Walking staff 1D6 (long, blunt)
Armor	Blessed robe 1D4 (flexible)
Defense	11
Toughness	10 **Pain Threshold** 5
Equipment	The Sun Stone (artifact, see page 257), camp equipment, aged sherry, 3 herbal cures, 3 thaler and 9 shillings
Shadow	Fiery copper (corruption: 0)

Magdala, barbarian witch

"The spirits want it so."

You grew up in the shadow of Karvosti, the plateau of the High Chieftain in Davokar. Your initiation ended in tragedy as the ritual was cut short by an abomination sprung forth from the night-black forest. In the fight you found your inner beast, and because of that the leader of your hex circle has sent you south. You are deemed to be able to defend yourself against the depraved Ambrians, should the need arise. Your mission is to observe and to report back to the hex circle. Davokar is about to awaken, in part because of the newcomers, and the forces that work for a wakening must be found and fought.

The Huldra on Karvosti is interested in everything related to the people of the Queen and may have tasked you with studying the ruined south in order to gain a better understanding of the Ambrians' past. In order to avoid unwanted attention you may claim to be exiled after having violated some taboo. Or you may actually have broken some vow and willfully chosen to lay low far from the witches' territory. You have probably met and familiarized yourself with others who have traveled south, most likely the barbarians Kvarek and Karla or Elder Folks like Rageor, Niha and Fenya.

MAGDALA	
Race	Human (barbarian)
Traits	*Bushcraft*
Accurate 10, **Cunning** 9, **Discreet** 7, **Persuasive** 5, **Quick** 13, **Resolute** 15, **Strong** 11, **Vigilant** 10	
Abilities	*Natural Warrior* (novice), *Shapeshift* (adept), *Witchcraft* (novice)
Weapons Accurate	Dagger 1D6 (short), Claws (in animal form) 1D8 (short)
Armor	Witch gown 1D4 (flexible), Skin 1D4 (in animal form)
Defense	13
Toughness	11 **Pain Threshold** 6
Equipment	Camp equipment, 2 thaler and 7 shillings
Shadow	Red with a few flakes of rust (corruption: 1)

Niha, changeling con artist

"You won't regret it!"

You were exchanged for your parents' firstborn in a barbarian settlement, and from there it only got worse. "Mother" and "Father" had you work as an apprentice of the village tanner and sent you away as soon as your heritage became apparent. Since then you have learned to manage on your own, but you have always wondered why your elven kin gave you up.

You have traveled the countryside of Ambria hoping to find answers, or at least some other outcasts to form some sort of communion with. If all else fails you have heard of a human named Vernam, who lives in Thistle Hold and is said to know much about elves.

You may have ended up south of the mountains for various reasons, but most likely as the traveling companion of Rageor, Magdala or Fenya. If you have any friends it is because they are outsiders or because they may have knowledge about the elves that once abandoned you to the humans.

NIHA	
Race	Changeling
Traits	*Long-lived*, *Shapeshifter* (novice)
Accurate 10, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 15, **Persuasive** 13, **Quick** 11, **Resolute** 9, **Strong** 5, **Vigilant** 10	
Abilities	*Backstab* (novice), *Feint* (adept)
Weapons Discreet/ Accurate	Dagger 1D6 (short), Walking staff 1D6 (long, blunt)
Armor	Studded leather 1D4 (Impeding)
Defense	13
Toughness	10 **Pain Threshold** 3
Equipment	Straw doll found by your crib (presumably left by the elves), camp equipment, 11 shilling and 3 ortegs
Shadow	Polished brass (corruption: 0)

Karla, barbarian Ranger

"Silence, let the tracks tell their tale."

You are originally from Eastern Davokar but live in exile after a bloody misunderstanding with the son of the clan chieftain. The chieftain has many sons left but still holds a grudge, which is why you decided to explore the world outside Davokar. In truth you did not have much of a choice.

Two of your problems were solved when you got employed with one of the caravans traveling back and forth over the Titans: for one thing it brings you far away from any vengeful relatives of the boy you slew, second it provides a welcome addition to your coin purse. You may have befriended other characters on the road south across the mountain, for example Kvarek, Rageor, Niha or Fenya.

KARLA			
Race	Human (barbarian)		
Traits	*Bushcraft*		
Accurate 5, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 11, **Persuasive** 9, **Quick** 13, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 10, **Vigilant** 15			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (adept), *Marksman* (novice), *Sixth sense* (novice)		
Weapons Vigilant/ Accurate	Crossbow 1D12, Dagger 1D6 (short), Handaxe 1D8		
Armor	Hardened leather 1D4 (Impeding)		
Defense	11		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	Camp equipment, hunting snares, fishing rod, quiver with 12 bolts, 6 shillings and 6 ortegs		
Shadow	Green like baby leaves (corruption: 0)		

Fenya, goblin treasure-hunter

"There you are, my precious treasure!"

You were born and raised in the goblin village of Karabbadokk, where your family settled down when the rest of the tribe joined a band of robbers held up in the forests of Mervidun. When you could not find work in Thistle Hold, the alluring city in which you never got to set foot, you left Karabbadokk in search of a better life. You have to make haste – you have already reached the age of five and life is short!

On your way south you met a grumpy old sow which you ensnared with your goblin magic and named Kverula. Over a short period of time the two of you have developed a deep love-hate relationship. Together with Kverula you have enlisted as mule keeper on a southbound caravan. During the journey you hope to recruit companions and gather funds for arranging a treasure-hunt into Davokar. Kvarek as well as Rageor, Magdala, Niha and Karla may very well have been approached on the topic, already on the road towards the dead lands below the mountains.

FENYA			
Race	Goblin		
Traits	*Pariah, Short-lived, Survival instinct* (novice)		
Accurate 10, **Cunning** 5, **Discreet** 13, **Persuasive** 7, **Quick** 15, **Resolute** 9, **Strong** 11, **Vigilant** 10			
Abilities	*Polearm mastery* (adept), *Ritualist* (novice, *Familiar*)		
Weapons Accurate	Dagger 1D6 (short), Spear 1D10 (long)		
Armor	Leather gown 1D4 (Impeding)		
Defense	13		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	Camp equipment, 3 ortegs		
Shadow	Red as oxygenated blood (corruption: 1)		

KVERULA, THE WILD SOW			
Race	Beast (sow)		
Traits	*Armored* (I), *Natural weapon* (I)		
Accurate 11, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 9, **Persuasive** 5, **Quick** 13, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 10			
Weapons Accurate	Tusks 1D6 (short)		
Armor	Skin 1D4 (flexible)		
Defense	13		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Shadow	Yellowish red, like aspen leaves in the fall (corruption: 0)		

On gender and names

Feel free to change the gender of the premade characters if you wish. Below are suggested names for the example characters with their genders switched: Kvarek becomes Kvara, Orlan becomes Oria, Ansel becomes Anselma, Bartolom becomes Bartala, Magdala becomes Magbrod, Niha becomes Niho and Karla becomes Karlas. Both Rageor and Fenya remains the same regardless of the character's gender.

Onwards to Yndaros

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS have for different reasons ended up in a caravan camp just south of the Titans. The camp spans a vast area, vegetated by slender trees whose leaves have started to shift in autumnal nuances. About forty wagons are parked in a random pattern and between them tents have been raised. Most of the tents are tiny and weathered but a few of them look like small palaces made of cloth – evidently belonging to some of the nobles who have waited until the last moment to leave their estates. In a dozen places fires are burning day and night, some of them surrounded by logs, others by more or less sloppily crafted benches.

The Lost Land

Player characters who have been raised in some part of Alberetor or have been there some time all carry dark and haunting memories from the journey to the camp.

South of the camp the ground has still vigor enough to nourish vegetation, but the crops soon to be harvested are not what they once were. The fields are sparsely vegetated by pale stalks with shrunken ears of grain; the orchards that used to be full of apples, lemons and sweet plums are all but naked; and scrawny cattle can be seen everywhere, grazing in the all but naked fields, roaming wild after being left adrift by their previous owners and caretakers.

The ones who come from a place further south or out east have witnessed even darker scenes. In those places the soil is blackened and completely lifeless, often transformed into dusty deserts incapable of absorbing water from either rains or rivers. Abandoned cities, deserted residencies and castles, ghostly farms whose livestock enclosures are occupied by nothing other than carcasses – Alberetor is dead and all but gone. All that is left is what the people of Queen Korinthia carry with them on the journey over the mountains.

MOST OF THE people in the camp give face to a mixture of sorrow, relief and hope. They are sad to have to leave the place where their family has lived for generations, where their ancestors are buried and where so much of themselves is tied to the earth, the landscape and the now abandoned buildings. They are relieved to finally be on their way, to have left the ash deserts of the south and reached the still living soils of the mountain region. And the hope they feel can be seen in their slightly curved lips; the hope that the world north of the Titans shall prove to be as flourishing and welcoming as everybody says.

Scene 0: Beginnings

WHETHER OR NOT the player characters are acquainted with each other, it is suggested that they happen to meet while gathering around the same fire at the border of the camp. By the fire is also one or more of the persons who are to become their traveling companions, possibly the talkative coachman Telk, maybe also the pathfinders Belun and Ludo.

The persons around the fire prepare their supper and discuss the latest in a long list of bad news: all

caravan owners have decided to make ready for winter on the south side of the Titans, because of the rapidly approaching snows. The question is if they are right in assuming that the mountain passes soon will be closed off or if there still is a chance to make it through before the winter reigns supreme.

There is also time to talk about other things. The coachman Telk (or whomever makes the characters company) is a curious fellow and is not afraid to ask his new acquaintances where they are from and where they are going – a great opportunity for the players to "get to know" their own characters and introduce them to one another.

After a while, yet another person joins the circle around the fire, Telk's friend Keler. He is visibly exited and leans in to whisper something in the ear of the coachman. The character who succeeds with a roll against Vigilant can make out the essentials: there is one caravan owner who has decided to brave the danger and dare an attempt to reach Ambria before the snows.

If none of the characters should hear what is said they will probably still understand what is going on – Telk brightens up like a midsummer sun, excuses himself and rushes to his tent to pack his belongings. The player characters can either extort the truth from the weak-willed Keler with a successful roll against *[Persuasive +5]*, or they can without further ado tag along with the duo as they walk towards the northern part of the camp. There Master Argasto is preparing to leave, as soon as the next morning comes.

Scene 1: The Tryout

ARGASTO SITS in his pavilion inspecting the inventory befor the trip. At the same time he takes the opportunity to interview potential companions. Outside a small line has formed, and in front of the characters stands Telk and Keler, maybe also Belun and Ludo. Both these couples can brag about having survived a number of trips over the Titans and will consequently leave the tent with bright smiles on their lips. Then it is time for the player characters to enter the pavilion.

Master Argasto – a plump man in his fifties with rose-red cheeks, dressed in baggy clothes of felts and skins – ogles them briefly before returning to his list of equipment with a short: "Well?". It is now up to the player characters to try to convince the caravan owner that they are suitable for a place in the traveling company, and that they will prove to be more useful than troublesome. When they have made their arguments he looks up: "Can you defend yourselves? I am not convinced..."

Argasto

Manner

In the descriptions of non-player characters and creatures there is a characteristic called Manner. What is written there is a suggestion on how the Game Master can portray the person or creature in a way which both says something about the NPC and makes it easier for the players to distinguish between the figures they meet.

He stresses that there is a limit to the number of people he can accommodate, and the ones who receive a spot need to be "individuals of importance", meaning persons who improve his chances to get the wagons across the mountains. If the characters want to tag along they must prove themselves worthy by participating in a fighting test against some of his loyal caravan guards. He is not suggesting a fight to the death, only to "first blood". Hence, the combatant who receives 1 point of damage or more to his or her *Toughness* must step aside and admit defeat.

The fighting test takes place in light of the great fire outside Argasto's tent, and before it starts the caravan owner loudly proclaims that he does not want to see a slaughter. Bruises and cuts are acceptable; more severe injuries must be avoided at all costs since he needs everyone fit to travel by morning! Whatever the outcome of the combat may be, Argasto will accept all player characters as traveling companions – he enjoyed the performance, even if they were defeated by the guards.

Caravan Guard

"I'll be careful, I promise ..."

A group of women and men (numbering as many as the player characters +1) of Ambrian origin, that all have survived a number of journeys over the mountains. They are tough fighters that never back down from a fight, even if they are lacking somewhat in terms of personal skill.

Manner	Grins confidently, swings their swords provokingly		
Race	Human (Ambrian)		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Contacts* (caravan guards)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Sword 4		
Armor	Scalemail 3 (Impeding)		
Defense	+2 (shield)		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	1D10 shilling, chewing tobacco		
Shadow	Unpolished copper (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The player character that seems biggest and strongest is initially attacked by two guards. Remaining guards move against one character each.

In the Company of Thieves

THE SECOND CHAPTER deals with the hunt for and confrontation with a thief who is bold enough to steal the Sun Stone – an artifact that the caravan will have a hard time managing without as the winter takes its hold. Aside from a more or less challenging combat sequence the chapter also includes various forms of simpler problem-solving. The characters need to find out who the thief is, interrogate his acquaintances and finally track the scoundrel through the wilds. While trailing the thief they are at risk of triggering a trap and when they catch up to him there is the problem of approaching his hideout without being targeted.

ARGASTO'S CARAVAN has left the camp and the journey north has begun. The landscape is still forested, often so densely that the characters cannot see more than trees and the wobbling wagons on the road ahead. The journey goes slowly upwards, winding between wooded hills and shallow canyons. At times the wagons reach a crest from where towering mountains can be seen further north. The sun shines from a clear blue sky, as if the Sun God Prios has heard the travelers' prayers for good weather conditions. Even Argasto seems at ease: *"The Lawgiver's face smiles warmly over the pass; that bodes well."*

At dusk it is time to make camp, and the caravan forms a corral. The Ordo Magica novice Bartolom walks off to wash the road dust away in a nearby stream and shortly after that a cry is heard. The voice is Bartolom's: *"Thieves, thieves!"*

While the novice was bathing someone sneaked up and went through his coat – the Sun Stone was taken from an inside pocket! With the artifact gone the caravan may not be able to keep warm if the worst happens high up in the mountains. Argasto tells it like it is: *"Retrieve the Sun Stone or we must turn back, favored by Prios or not!"*

Scene 2: Find the Thief

IT IS EASY for the characters to identify the thief, but harder to catch up to him. The villain is a mule keeper called Keler who has gone missing. His wagon team does nothing to try to hide his absence, quite the opposite. However, his best (and only) friend Telk is withholding some information, if he cannot be persuaded otherwise.

There are two ways of finding the thief: they can either trail him from the crime scene, or they can convince Telk to speak up. After all, the Sun Stone may prove to be essential for the survival of them all.

PERSUADING THE THIEF'S FRIEND
(Quick solution)

Keler was part of a larger team but he primarily confided in another mule keeper, Telk. Telk knows that Keler is a thief and a liar but found the friendship heartening; he must be persuaded if he is to divulge any leads as to the whereabouts of Keler. Characters speaking to Telk (many can confirm that he was the one closest to Keler) have to pass a test against *Persuasive* to get information from the mule keeper: *"Keler mentioned some kind of hideout hereabout; I can point you in the right direction"*. That being done the trailing will become easier (see below).

TRAILING THE THIEF
(Long Solution)

The thief has left tracks that can be followed from the crime scene (the place on the riverbank where Bartolom left his coat). Keler has made an effort to hide the tracks and has also rigged a trap at the end of the trail (the trap is described in Scene 3)

To trail the thief to the watermill ruin takes two successful dice rolls against *[Vigilant←Discreet]*. Each player gets one try; start with the one who is most *Vigilant*. Only one successful roll is needed if Telk gave them the clue.

An alternative to tracking is to try to sense the direction to the Sun Stone by mystical means (characters with the ability *Witchsight* or some mystical power may try). In that case they may roll against *[Resolute –5]* the first time and *[Resolute –3]* the second to locate the ruin. The attempt can be made even if the characters earlier have failed to track Keler.

When two tests have been successfully made (only one is needed if they have Telk's information to go on) the characters arrive at the watermill ruin, where the second-rate thief Keler is waiting for his companions.

Bartolom as a player character

If Bartolom is under the control of a player some adjustments may have to be made. One alternative is to have another Ordo Magica novice along for the ride (Edira) and it is she who carries and gets robbed of the Sun Stone. Another way to handle it is to have the thief pick the pocket of the player character, maybe when he is sleeping or when someone has taken the opportunity to spill soup on his cloths so that he has to change.

Scene 3: Retrieving the Sun Stone

KELER HAS RIGGED a mechanical leghold trap which is triggered if someone is inattentive enough to step on it. The characters detect the trap if the one who walks first makes a successful roll against *[Vigilant –3]*. When spotted, the trap is easily avoided.

If the trap is triggered two things happen: The one who triggers it must pass a roll against *[Quick –3]* or take 4 in damage, and if damage is dealt the character gets caught until passing a roll against *[Strong –3]*.

Whether or not someone gets damaged, the trap makes such a loud noise that Keler knows they are coming. If so, determine the turn order and start the fight with ranged weapons. Keler is at the top of the ruin with his crossbow loaded and ready.

If the trap is not sprung, the characters may try to sneak up to and inside the ruin. For that a successful test against *[Discreet –5]* is needed, and remember that some armors may give further negative modifications. All who try to sneak must pass or Keler will notice them and start shooting at them with the crossbow.

Keler, Second-rate thief
"Please let me go, I will never steal again!"

Keler sees himself as a misunderstood genius and in particular as a misjudged master thief. Due to his curiosity and watchfulness he took notice of Bartolom's treasure, when the novice pulled it out of his pocket to warm his frozen fingers.

In order to prove his superiority Keler decided to pinch the artifact and make for the hideout of the gang of robbers he once was a member of. There he is determined to wait for his former companions to arrive, hoping that they will regret kicking him out when he hands them the Sun Stone. The best plan he has had in years, according to himself.

Manner	Shifty eyes, stutters		
Race	Human (Ambrian)		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Contacts* (outlaws)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 13 (–3), **Discreet** 11 (–1), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 5 (+5), **Strong** 9 (+1), **Vigilant** 15 (–5)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Crossbow 5, Dagger 3 (short)		
Armor	Leather cuirass 2 (Impeding)		
Defense	+2		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	The Sun Stone, 3 thaler, lucky charm (dysfunctional), 12 bolts in a quiver		
Shadow	Darkened silver (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: Keler fires his crossbow, then pulls his dagger. But as soon as it is evident that he will get hurt, he throws his weapons away and pleads for his life.

Keler

If the player characters close in on the ruin Keler shouts: *"You will regret this! The undead Mal-Rogan will find you and chop you to pieces. Not even death could beat him; you think you are a match for Mal-Rogan, the Master of Death!?"* He will not enter into melee. Instead he throws both himself and the crossbow to the ground if the characters come close. The Sun Stone is in his pocket.

If Keler is brought back to the caravan he will be the target of harsh words as well as of pebbles and dirt. Argasto will deprive him of food and tools and then send him into the wilderness as punishment for his crime. If the player characters should suggest some other form of reprimand, Argasto will concur with the argument since it was they who found the stone and captured the villain.

SCENE 3.1: MAL-ROGAN ARRIVES

If the Game Master is on a mean streak or if the players choose to wait for Keler's companions, a raggedy band of robbers soon arrives from the south along the overgrown footpath. A couple of robbers act as scouts and the leader follows behind – Mal-Rogan may be undead but he is not stupid.

Mal-Rogan, undead brigand chief

"The Fire Stone is MINE!"

The Queen's guard Rogan Gorinder died in the war against the Dark Lords. He got an arm chopped off in combat, the wound festered and the healers were powerless to neutralize the black blood infection that coursed through his veins.

But instead of dying, Rogan arose as an undead, with puss dripping from his truncated arm and with blackened veins visible on neck and temples. Why? No one knows, but Rogan took it as a dark sign that he had been chosen for greatness. Nowadays the robber baron calls himself Mal-Rogan and leads a band of robbers in the mountains where he grew up, dreaming of founding a veritable bandit kingdom.

If the player characters cannot stop the blight-stricken nobleman he will make a name for himself throughout the southern parts of Ambria, were he roams around as a raving horror leaving desecrated corpses in his wake.

Manner	Speaks in a croaking voice, tilting his head back and forth
Race	Undead
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	*Long-lived*, *Undead* (I)

Accurate 7 (+3), **Cunning** 5 (+5), **Discreet** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 11 (–1), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 17 (–7), **Vigilant** 10 (0)

Pansar Rogan and Ambrian characters

Player characters like Orlan, Bartolom and Ansel may very well have met or even been friends with Rogan in the past, making for an interesting reunion...

Mal-Rogan

Abilities	*Curse* (master), *Exceptionally Strong* (adept), *Iron Fist* (adept)		
Weapons Strong	Spiked club 6		
Armor	Fortified chainmail 4 (Impeding)		
Defense	+3		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	—
Equipment	His own mummified hand in a rusty chain around the neck (artifact, see page 257), 4 thaler		
Shadow	Black as tar (corruption: thoroughly corrupt)		

Tactics: Rogan lets his followers attack first, while he puts a curse on what he believes to be the toughest enemy. When the curse has taken effect he moves in with his spiked club.

Robbers (as many as the PCs)

"Your money or your... or you die!"

Manner	Stares with misty eyes		
Race	Human (Ambrian)		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Contacts* (thugs & brigands)		

Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 15 (–5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 5 (+5), **Strong** 9 (+1), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)

Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Crossbow 5, Spear 4 (long)		
Armor	Leather cuirass 2 (Impeding)		
Defense	+2		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	5 shillings, card deck or dice set, chewing tobacco, 6 bolts in a quiver		
Shadow	Rusty iron (corruption: 2)		

Tactics: The robbers fire a salvo with their crossbows before attacking with spears. They try to stay alive while Mal-Rogan kills the enemies one by one.

Expansion tip

The undead Rogan can be used to complicate the life of the player characters for a very long time. After the encounter at the watermill ruin he may come to believe that the Sun Stone is vital for the success of his grandiose plans. If so, he will most likely trail the characters, to Yndaros and beyond, and grow into a remarkably tenacious nemesis. Prior to that he can appear when the characters are threatened by the elves (see Chapter 3), offering to help if they but give him the stone.

THE WATERMILL RUIN

The watermill was built long ago by some overly optimistic baron, hoping to colonize the mountains. Nowadays it is covered by moss and creepers and the mid-level floors have caved in so that only the stone-based top floor remains. The robbers use a ladder to get up there, a ladder that is too tall to be hoisted up or toppled inside the ruin. From the windows of the top-floor you have a good view of the surroundings.

Toll of the Mountains

THE CHARACTERS KNOW NOTHING about it, but among their fellow travelers are a couple of persons who have been active in the forest of Davokar, as pathfinders for treasure-hunters from Thistle Hold. Because of that they have managed to attract the interest of the Black Cloak Lestra, fallen out of favor with the Iron Pact, and also attracted a horrible curse that already has killed most of their previous companions. This third chapter describes what happens when the elves of the Iron Pact catch up to their prey.

THE GAME MASTER should note that Chapter 3 is of a more open nature than the previous ones, thereby more in line with how adventures normally are designed for Symbaroum. The GM sets events in motion (see Scene 4), then it is up to the players to take the rudder.

The ability to respect the players' initiatives is crucial (the golden rule of being a Game Master). Intense gaming moments occur due to the interaction of player choices and the GM's presentation of the world. After the opening scene a number of other scenes are described, but in which order they will appear – or if they take place at all – is an open question. Also remember the silver rule of the GM: plans mean nothing, but planning is imperative! The Game Master needs to understand the goals of different agents and what they are prepared to do in order to reach them; from that the sequence of the scenes will be derived, based on the players' actions and the reactions of the NPCs.

The Game Master's Introduction

SOME TIME AGO the two barbarian pathfinders Belun and Ludo were active as treasure-hunters in the city of Thistle Hold, close to the southern edge of Davokar. When they learned that other members of their most recent expedition had started to die in horrible ways they fled. Some of their companions died in silence, others were slain and some were ... transformed. They turned into abominations, and as such they were of course killed by the city's watchmen and residents.

As far as the brothers know the expedition they took part in was a miserable failure – they never reached the ruins of the deep and had to make do with a smaller tomb closer to the forest's edge. But it seems that someone else views things differently. Agents of the Iron Pact (an alliance of elves and Elder Folks) believe that the members of the expedition are infected by the blight of Davokar – and must be killed. The elves have trailed the brothers, determined to slay them before the corruption they carry affects others.

And it does not help that the Black Cloak Lestra who travels with the caravan starts suspecting that something is not right with Belun. She is correct to do so, because the pathfinder has begun to show signs of a grave blight-sickness. Player characters with the right abilities will soon be able to confirm the suspicions of the Twilight Friar...

Belun

Ludo

Lestra

The Players' Introduction

ON THE ROAD up to the mountain pass the weather continues to be favorable, even if the cold bites on cheeks and fingers. The Sun Stone has not been activated yet. By "the laws of magic", which stipulate that every lit candle creates shadows, this must not be done until truly called for. You who have befriended Bartolom (or Edira) also sense that the novice knows that waking the warmth of the stone will come to affect the one doing so – another reason for not waking it prematurely...

Scene 4: The Price of Firewood

SUN STONE OR not, for the iron nights in the pass you also need firewood. For that purpose the travelers make short forays into the increasingly sparse vegetation on the hills. Suddenly the roaring of a beast is heard, soon merged with desperate cries from humans. The characters are nearby and arrive first on the scene. By then the following stage is set:

A monstrous wolf (a successful roll against *Beast Lore: Hunger Wolf*) stands snarling and drooling in front of the two pathfinders and a Black Cloak. Behind the monstrosity a number of smaller wolf beasts have formed a half-circle (a successful roll against *Beast Lore: Jakaars*).

Consequently, the upcoming fight will involve the characters and a group of enemies, one of which is more dangerous (the hunger wolf) than the others (the jakaars). The characters also have a couple of NPCs on their side, to make use of in a tactically sound manner.

If the players refrain from giving orders (a roll against *Persuasive* is needed if the order entails facing the hunger wolf) the pathfinders will take on the jakaars, while the Black Cloak heals them (and searches them for signs of corruption). If so, that fight can be handled summarily and without rolling any dice; the main fight is the one between the characters and the hunger wolf.

Note that the pathfinders and the Black Cloak Lestra can be hurt or struck down in this fight, but are not supposed to die at this stage. The reason for involving the trio in the scene is for the characters to get to know them. Should the Game Master prefer to swap them for other travelers who can die here, please do so.

Tracking the hunger wolf – respect the player initiative

It is not unlikely that the players will want to backtrack the movement of the hunger wolf, back to the elven camp. To do that the characters must make three successful rolls against *[Vigilant +5]*. Start with the most skilled tracker of the group (the highest value in *Vigilant*), then let the others give it a try.

Hunger Wolf, the elf scout Keri-Las in her wolf shape

Growls with bared teeth, then tries to attack Ludo and Belun

Race	Elf (Summer elf)		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Armored* (I), *Natural weapon* (I)		
Accurate 10 (0) , **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 15 (–5), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Acrobatics* (novice), *Natural Warrior* (novice), *Shapeshift* (adept)		
Weapons Accurate	Bite 4 (short)		
Armor	Wolf hide 2 (flexible)		
Defense	–5		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Equipment	An arm bracelet of rusted iron, 6 shillings		
Shadow	Blood red with a slightly coagulated rim (corruption: 3)		

Tactics: Keri-Las tries to get to the barbarian scouts and will kill them if she cannot catch them alive. She tries not to kill others (like the player characters), but will hurt them if they stand in her way.

When the hunger wolf dies it transforms back to its original shape.

A severely battered elf lies on the ground, as lifeless as the beast just killed by the characters. She is dressed in a simple wool coat and carries no weapon. In truth her name was Keri-Las and she was a scout for the group that has been hunting the brothers.

She wears a nicely decorated bracelet round her left upper arm. A player character with the ability *Loremaster* who makes a successful roll against *Cunning* realizes that it must be an ancient elven oath ring; a symbol for the Iron Pact, supposedly an age-old alliance or agreement between humans and elves.

Jakaar (as many as the PCs)
The jakaar is a canine pack animal, as prone to capture its own prey as it is to eat from cadavers left by other beats. The pack following Keri-Las takes the chance of attacking together with the hunger wolf.

Race	Beast		
Resistance	Weak		
Traits	*Armored* (I), *Natural weapon* (I)		
Accurate 13 (−3), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 11 (−1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 15 (−5), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 10 (0), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Bite 3 (short)		
Armor	Wolf hide 2 (flexible)		
Defense	−5		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	5
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Green like spring grass (corruption: 0)		
Tactics: The jakaars trail the hunger wolf and attack one opponent each (or the pathfinders if the PCs take on the hunger wolf).			

SCENE 4.1: REACTIONS TO THE DEAD ELF

If the hunger wolf dies during the battle, the characters have the corpse of an elf to dispose of. The reactions of other travelers will depend on who learns about what has happened, which of course is decided by whom is present during the fighting and who the player characters talk to after returning to the base camp. Below is a recount of how the most prominent individuals in the caravan will react to the news, information that the Game Master can use as a basis for the drama amongst the travelers.

The player characters who successfully roll against *[Vigilant +3]* notice that the sight of the elf makes Belun and Ludo, the two pathfinders, very nervous. They try to hide it by acting as if it is raining, and they will not tell anyone else about the corpse whether or not the characters ask them to keep their mouths shut.

The Black Cloak Lestra is apparently curious about the corpse and asks out loud: "Who or what was the hunger wolf out to get?" A successful test against *Vigilant* reveals that she glances at the barbarian brothers.

If Argasto learns of what has happened and what was hidden under the pelt of the hunger wolf he becomes even more eager to get a move on: "Elves are bad news, we must hurry to Yndaros, we'll be safe in the city of the Queen!"

Whispering Elves

The content of the elven conversation can be understood by someone with the ability *Loremaster* (adept), if they pass a test against *Cunning*.

Saran-Ri: *"Let us strike them all, we don't know who else is infected."*
Godrai: *"No, the two are enough, no others."*

And, if the PCs have battled and beaten the hunger wolf:
Saran-Ri: *"They slew my Keri-Las."*
Godrai: *"I know, her sacrifice will not be forgotten. But the killing ends with the blight-stricken barbarians. We won't start a war today."*
Saran-Ri: *"Huh, you know as I do that war is inevitable. If not today ..."*
Godrai: *"Enough!"*

Saran-Ri growls and backs away.
Vigilant: There is something beast-like in how the elf moves (Saran-Ri is also a shapeshifter).

Bartolom/Edira can tell the others about the bracelet carried by the corpse but has no opinion on the matter. However, he/she is very interested in the shapeshifting magic used by the elf: *"It seems to be some kind of elven witchcraft. Have I told you about my own tradition, the order of Wizardry, which is a refined version of the primitive practice of the witches?"*

Intermediary scene: Stormnight

THE CARAVAN STRUGGLES up the steeper and steeper road toward the pass. As the first crest is traversed the wagons roll out onto a plateau, and suddenly the weather changes for the worse. The wind picks up, the sky grows dark and snow starts falling.

Argasto orders the wagons to form a corral for protection against the storming elements. A character with the ability *Witchsight* may roll against *Resolute* to realize that the storm is conjured (the elf Godrai has used the ritual *Turn Weather*) and the PC hears a wrathful voice singing in the winds. If none of the PCs hear it, the Game Master can let Lestra do so, if only for the effect.

The travelers in the caravan cover any openings on their wagons, put blankets over the huddled pack animals and prepare for a long night in the cold.

Scene 6: The Ultimatum

WHEN MORNING COMES the storm subsides. But the situation is far from ideal; it is doubtful if the caravan can continue since the snow lies deep across the plateau. A brawling discussion erupts between those who want to push onwards and those who would rather not risk getting stuck down the road.

Right then two shapes emerge out of the light snowfall, two wanderers on foot approaching the corral. The lookout Telk cries out: *"Elves, I think it is elves!"*. The quarrel dies out, everything is silent.

The first of the two elves introduces himself as Godrai and his quiet friend as Saran-Ri. Godrai says: *"We want the ones called Belun and Ludo."* When asked why he answers: *"They have violated the treaties; they have tunneled too deep into the soil of old Davokar. They are blight-stricken and must be purged."*

If the characters do not speak up and refuse to hand over the pathfinders, Argasto will. Godrai's companion whispers something in the ear of the leader, who responds calmly. And after the sibilant conversation Godrai says: *"I will have those two. Blood will flow if you refuse. We will return at sundown."*

The elves leave and the people of the caravan are left to discuss the ultimatum.

What really happened

If the PCs are afforded the opportunity to question Ludo and manage to make him speak (requires a successful roll against *Persuasive* and credible threats) he has the following story to tell: He and Belun were hired as pathfinders by a group of treasure-hunters, headed by an unpleasant individual named Gorak and his second, the changeling Alahara.

The group traveled deep into Davokar but did not reach the planned target: the darker parts of the forest and its well-preserved ruins from the days of Symbaroum. Instead they came across a smaller tomb, the final resting place of a long dead barbarian lord. The others in the team got away with gold, jewelry and mystical objects; all that Gorak wanted for himself was the verdigris-covered copper crown worn by the dead lord; a crown that had merged with the cranium.

Once returned to Thistle Hold, the expedition's members lived like kings for a while. Then they started to die, or change (if Belun already has changed, Ludo says that the same happened to the others). Gorak and Alahara disappeared after having talked to Lasifor Nightpitch, the Mayor of the Hold. Then Belun started to feel as if someone were watching him and they fled to the south.

Ludo suddenly remembers another detail: one evening by the fire everyone in the expedition got to hold the cranium with the crown. He recalls that the skull, despite being dead, was warm to the touch and that he for a moment felt as if its dead eyes looked back at him in the glow from the camp fire...

Scene 7: Negotiations under the axe

THE CARAVAN COMPANIONS have to make up their minds: do they hand the pathfinders Belun and Ludo over or do they defend them when the elves reappear? The caravan owner Argasto is full of doubt but will be forced to make the final judgment. Before he does, he wants to learn what others think on the matter.

The Black Cloak Lestra wants to put the brothers in shackles and take them to the monastery of the Twilight Friars on the northern slopes of the Titans, where member of her order can *"care for them if they are sick"*. The Black Cloaks are very interested in everything related to the blight and corruption of Davokar.

Lestra will say and do whatever it takes to make this happen. She is, for instance, willing to lie about what Godrai and Saran-Ri whispered to each other; she claims that they will kill everyone, extradition or not, but that they would prefer to have the two handed over first. Then all others will die, for safety's sake.

The two barbarians are of course opposed to being extradited; something that Ludo loudly proclaims while Belun mutters it. The mule keeper Telk wants the brothers to be surrendered: "Better them than me!" Concurring mumbles and cries are heard from many others in the caravan.

The PCs will tip the scales. If they are for an extradition Argasto decides in their favor, according to scene 8–1: Extradition. If the player characters are against it and recommend that the travelers take up the fight against the elves, then Argasto will reach a decision along those lines. If so, see scene 8–2: Final Battle.

If the decision is to hand them over, Lestra will make a final attempt to persuade the player characters to reverse their choice: *"You are seriously mistaken if you believe this strengthens our position. Prios, the One and the Giver of Laws, wants the corrupted brought to Ambria, where my brothers and sisters will care for them."* If the PCs are not susceptible to such religious arguments she adopts a more practical approach: *"We can't just hand them over, they must be studied! The horrors of Davokar must be understood if we are to fight them."* If the PCs still stand their ground, then Lestra reluctantly accepts it.

Scene 8: Extradition or Combat

ARGASTO'S DECISION ON what to do with the blight-stricken brothers either results in a fight with the barbarians and an extradition (8–1), or in a final battle between the people of the caravan and the elves (8–2). Irrespective of what happens, the caravan owner will likely need the help of all capable companions.

SCENE 8–1: EXTRADITION

When Belun realizes that he will be turned over to the elves he enters the last stage of his condition. This happens before the elves have returned to demand their prize. Ludo will also put up a fight, but seems to be as shocked as everyone else when Belun transforms.

If Ludo survives and is handed over to the elves, Saran-Ri will transform into a beamon (a huge bear beast), bite hold of the barbarian and drag him away in the abating storm.

The last the PCs see of the pathfinder is his waving arms and desperate facial expression. Soon they disappear from sight and moments later the cries of Ludo go silent, either because they are drowned out by the cold winds of the mountain pass or because not even the blight-stricken can make sounds when they have passed over into the realm of the dead.

Belun, blight born

"I feel fine ... no ... no, nooooooo ..."

Belun dies a bloody death when something terrible literally claws itself out of his skin: a towering creature with bare muscles, with fingers transformed into knifes of bone, and with outgrowths from the cranium, as if it wore a pointy bone crown.

The abomination is furious and famished, and will kill indiscriminately until it is slain. In death the body collapses into a bloody, shapeless heap that rapidly begins to rot. All that remains is the deformed cranium.

Manner	First trembling with fear, then trembling from the dark power that surges through him
Race	Abomination (Blight born)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	*Armored* (I), *Natural weapon* (I), *Robust* (I)
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 11 (–1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 10 (0)	
Abilities	*Berserker* (master), *Natural Warrior* (master), *Man-at-arms* (novice)
Weapons Accurate	Claws 12/10 (short), two attacks at the same target
Armor	Tough flesh 7
Defense	+2
Toughness	15 **Pain Threshold** 8
Equipment	None
Shadow	Oozing black (thoroughly corrupt)

Tactics: The abomination that once was Belun attacks the target which is biggest, closest or did the most damage during the previous turn. It never tries to defend itself and ignores the risk of being hit by Free Attacks if passing enemies on the way towards a particular target.

Ludo, pathfinder

"I am not sick, I barely touched the skull, I promise!"

Ludo wears a stigma as a sign of his growing corruption – he has wounds that will not heal in the creases of all bodily joints. Note that if Ludo is saved, he too will sooner or later reach the same end as Belun did. When Ludo is transformed the Game Master can reuse the appearance and stats of Belun.

Manner	Blinking eyes, quavering voice
Race	Human (barbarian)
Resistance	Weak
Traits	*Bushcraft*
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 15 (–5)	
Abilities	None
Weapons Accurate	Bow 4, Axe 4
Armor	Leather armor 2 (Impeding)
Defense	–2 (shield)
Toughness	11 **Pain Threshold** 6
Equipment	None
Shadow	Moldy green with spots of growing darkness (corruption: 9)

Tactics: Ludo wants to survive and will do his utmost in the fight against the PCs.

SCENE 8–2: FINAL BATTLE

If the player characters do not speak up for surrendering the pathfinders, Argasto decides to fight for them. In that case, combat with the elves is inevitable.

The elves are dangerous. Godrai is a summer elf in full bloom and Saran-Ri a young summer elf skilled in battle – which becomes apparent when the fight begins. However, they are only out to get Belun and Ludo; the PCs can surrender or flee at any time.

The elves make their move at sundown. They take aim on Belun and Ludo and will withdraw once the barbarians are dead; they will not hunt those who run or strike at persons that have surrendered. Argasto, Lestra and the brothers will fight alongside the player characters. There are two ways to handle the fight:

- the players get to handle one each of the above mentioned individuals during the battle, relieving the GM from that task.
- the characters fight either Godrai or Saran-Ri; the other elf is facing Argasto and his companions. In this case the outcome of both fights is decided by what happens in the characters' fight – if they win, both groups do.

Ludo will do his utmost in the fight against the characters. However, despite his barbarian weaponry and appearance he is really not that tough.

Godrai

Godrai, elf of late summer

"Give us what we want and you are free to go."

Godrai approaches riding on a huge elk, but dismounts before the battle. The characters who heard a voice in the storm can tell that it was Godrai's when he speaks or cries out.

Manner	Lordly stature, stern expression
Race	Elf (summer elf)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	*Long-lived*

Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 11 (–1), **Discreet** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 5 (+5), **Vigilant** 7 (+3)

Abilities	*Acrobatics* (master), *Alchemy* (novice), *Marksman* (adept), *Poisoner* (adept), *Quick Draw* (novice), *Ritualist* (novice, *Turn Weather*)		
Weapons Accurate	Bow 5, Sword 4, both with poison (damage 3 for 3 turns)		
Armor	Lacquered Silk Cuirass 3 (Flexible)		
Defense	–2		
Toughness	10	**Pain Threshold**	3
Equipment	Two quivers with 12 arrows in each (the arrows in one of them are coated with moderate poison), headband of rusty iron		
Shadow:	Bluish red (corruption: 1)		

Tactics: Godrai will shoot poisoned arrows at enemies with ranged weapons and use movement and acrobatics to stay out of melee.

Saran-Ri, elf of early summer

"It always ends this way, with your blood on the ground."

The shapeshifting elf comes rushing through the snow in his beamon form, fully prepared to sacrifice himself in order to kill the blight-stricken barbarians.

Manner	Wary and alert
Race	Elf (summer elf)
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	*Long-lived*. **As beamon:** *Armored* (I), *Natural weapon* (I)

Accurate 13 (– 3), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 11 (–1), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 10 (0)

Abilities	*Iron Fist* (novice), *Natural Warrior* (novice), *Shapeshift* (adept)		
Weapons Strong	Claws 3 (short)		
Armor	Bear skin 2 (flexible)		
Defense	–1		
Toughness	15	**Pain Threshold**	8
Equipment	Ring of rusty iron		
Shadow	Burning red with dancing flakes of soot (corruption: 3)		

Tactics: Saran-Ri will try to beat down the strongest melee opponent first, then the rest of the melee fighters before moving on to mystics and marksmen.

Argasto, caravan owner

"It is MY caravan, I'm in charge!"

Manner	Sighs deeply, shakes his head
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	*Privileged*
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 11 (–1), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 15 (–5), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 13 (–3), **Vigilant** 7 (+3)	
Abilities	*Recovery* (novice), *Shield Fighter* (adept), *Steadfast* (novice)
Weapons Accurate	Sword 5, Shield 2 (plus chance to knock-down)
Armor	Scalemail 3 (Impeding)
Defense	+1 (shield)
Toughness	13 **Pain Threshold** 7
Equipment	4 thaler and 4 shillings, caravan with 6 wagons
Shadow	Bronze, dull and unpolished (corruption: 0)

Tactics: If the decision has been made to defend the pathfinders Argasto will do so to the best of his ability!

Lestra, Black Cloak

"I have my orders and you are in my way."

Manner	Bites her lip
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	*Privileged*
Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 15 (–5), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 9 (+1), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 11 (–1)	
Abilities	*Beast Lore* (adept, Abominations), *Medicus* (novice), *Witchsight* (novice)
Weapons Accurate	Spear 4 (long)
Armor	Blessed robe 2 (Flexible)
Defense	+1
Toughness	10 **Pain Threshold** 4
Equipment	Sun symbol on a necklace, scroll entitled "The Inner Nature of the Abomination", 5 thaler
Shadow	Brushed steel with a few dark spots (corruption: 1)

Tactics: Lestra is used to commanding Templars to do the dirty work once she has unmasked an abomination. But if that is what it takes, she will face both abominations and elves with spear in hand.

End Scene: View to the Future

NO MATTER HOW Scene 8 ends the storm finally dies out. The strong winds subside, the snowfall ends and soon the world rests peacefully under its snow white blanket.

After two more days of struggles the caravan makes it across the snowy plateau, up through the last pass where the passengers get a fantastic view of the landscape that stretches out before them.

Below in the distance lays Yndaros, the grand capital city of Ambria, towering over a farmland covered in swaying fields and pierced by glittering rivers. Here and there are patches of forest, burning in yellow and red. The patches become more frequent and grow bigger and bigger the further the gaze wanders north, and somewhere far away the trees gain mastery over the lowland – trees that together make out the dark and mythic forest of Davokar.

It is probably only your knowledge of its existence that makes you imagine seeing the red flame of Thistle Hold's beacon, located at the forest edge. Karvosti, the plateau ruled by witches and barbarian warriors, cannot be seen as it lies deep in the woods; the same goes for the haunted ruins of old Symbaroum. And that is likely for the best, since the ruins are said to be monstrously beautiful, almost hypnotic in their overgrown splendor.

Argasto interrupts your daydreams with a high pitched order to mount up. As soon as the cookware has been stowed away, the break is over and the caravan can resume its journey towards Yndaros. The wagons sway on bumpy routes, with animals in front and exhausted travelers holding ropes tied to the wagons behind.

Weary faces are gleaming with sweat in the chilly mountain air. Steamy clouds fume from mouths and muzzles alike. But despite fatigue and cold, the eyes of the travelers shine as brightly as the pinnacles on the Queen's palace – the Promised Land is waiting for them to arrive.

Appendix

IN THIS SECTION you will find a description of the mystical artifacts that the player characters can find or be affected by during the scenario. The section also includes two maps and short portrayals of some of the places visited in the final chapter of the adventure.

Artifacts

MAL-ROGAN'S MUMMIFIED HAND

The "amulet" of Mal-Rogan is in fact his own left hand, mummified and hung from a rusty chain. Mal-Rogan's soul is tied to the amulet and it can give others beside himself the powers listed below. However, the hand comes with a sever negative effect: as long as the amulet exists, Mal-Rogan will respawn, irrespective of how he was slain or what was done to the corpse – and he will do anything to reclaim his corrupt soul!

Word of Doom: If the owner of the amulet masters the ability *Leader* he can utter words of doom over his enemies. With a successful roll against *Resolute* the enemy's chance of making a successful hit is reduced for the remainder of the scene – the owner may make two attempts against *Defense* to avoid physical attacks.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D6

Black Bliss: With a successful roll against *Resolute*, the owner of the amulet may once per turn reroll a success test.
Action: Free
Corruption: 1D4

Mal-Rogan's revenge: It is possible for the one tied to the amulet to destroy it; all it takes is a successful roll against *Resolute*. If that happens, the released soul of Mal-Rogan will try to possess its previous master, according to the rules for the ritual *Possess* on page 145. Mal-Rogan is very vindictive and will do his utmost to punish all who were involved in slaying him and stealing his prized medallion – that is, the whole group of player characters and not only he who carried the amulet. If the possession fails Mal-Rogan dies a final death. The same happens when a successful possession has run its course.

THE SUN STONE

In ancient times wizards tied a wild fire spirit to this stone. Normally it glows with a pale light and gives off a mild warmth (enough to keep someone warm on an icy winter day). He who bonds with the stone can awaken the fire spirit and command it to perform more dramatic actions, namely the following ones:

Strike with Fire: With a successful roll against *Resolute*, the master of the Sun Stone can set an object in his sight on fire – including enemy garments. The fire burns for 1D4 turns and deals 1D4 damage each turn. Armor protects as usual. A burning person can put out the fire by rolling around on the ground (Movement Action) and passing a test against *Quick*.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

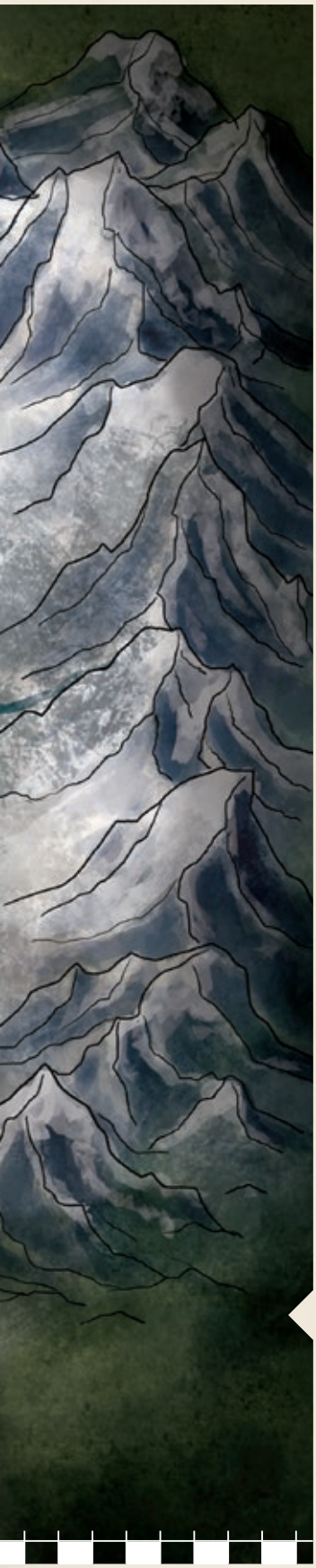
Amplify Flame: If the lord of the stone has powers which produce fire he can use the stone for amplifying his fire spells. With a successful roll against *Resolute* the effect is increased by one step (e.g. from 1D6 to 1D8, or with +1 if already 1D12).
Action: Free
Corruption: 1D4

Fire Spirit: With a successful roll against *Resolute*, the master of the stone can release the captured fire spirit, thereby destroying the artifact. The spirit appears as a towering humanoid made of flames and soot. It is grateful and will obey its former master for the remainder of the scene. It can be given simple commands (Free Action) like "guard this place", "attack that individual" or "keep me safe".
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D6

FIRE SPIRIT			
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	*Natural weapon* (III), *Spirit form* (II)		
Accurate 15 (−5), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 13 (−3) **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 11 (−1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	*Natural Warrior* (master)		
Weapons	Burning embrace 9 (long), two attacks against the same target		
Armor	None (takes half damage from all attacks)		
Defense	−3		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6

Ordo Magica and the Sun Stone

The masters of Ordo Magica will come to demand a very good explanation from the person who binds himself to the stone: a desperate fight against an abomination or with elves trying to take the stone count as valid reasons. If the Game Master does not think otherwise, a master who catches the PC with the Sun Stone will demand to have it back, on the Order's behalf, or demand a favor in exchange for the artifact. The latter can of course be a great opening for a larger or smaller adventure...



Locations

THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS are featured in the adventure. If the GM wishes to expand on it or if the PCs take initiatives which lead them elsewhere, you can always draw your own maps, before the game starts or during play.

THE MOUNTAIN PASS

The pass is in truth two passes, fringed by high slopes to the east and west and with a vast plateau between them.

THE CORRAL

The six wagons of the caravan form a corral each evening, or when under threat. Between the wagons wooden gates are placed, leaning against barrels. All travelers have a designated post in the event of danger, at a gate if the person can fight and otherwise in shelter behind the wagons. Finding one's place in the corral is a well-rehearsed routine which does not require instructions – an alarm from a guard or an order from Argasto is enough for everyone to rush to their assigned place, weapon in hand.

THE ELVEN CAMP

The elven camp is located about halfway over the plateau, on the western slope (the Game Master decides on a suitable location). The camp is simple, with an earth-toned tent, some equipment and three beds on which to rest or meditate. One of the elves is always on guard and the camp is skillfully concealed, although possible to find by following their tracks.

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PLAYER

NAME

RACE

OCCUPATION

PAIN THRESHOLD

TOUGHNESS
MAXIMUM

CORRUPTION
PERMANENT

CORRUPTION THRESHOLD

SHADOW

EXPERIENCE / UNSPENT

QUOTE

ACCURATE	CUNNING	DISCREET	PERSUASIVE	QUICK	RESOLUTE	STRONG	VIGILANT

ABILITIES & POWERS

NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M	NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M	NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M
NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M	NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M	NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M
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NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M	NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M	NAME EFFECT TYPE ◇◇◇ N A M

WEAPONS & ARMOR

WEAPON	DAMAGE	QUALITY	ATTRIBUTE
WEAPON	DAMAGE	QUALITY	ATTRIBUTE
WEAPON	DAMAGE	QUALITY	ATTRIBUTE
WEAPON	DAMAGE	QUALITY	ATTRIBUTE

ARMOR
PROTECTION
QUALITY
DEFENSE

ARMOR
PROTECTION
QUALITY
DEFENSE

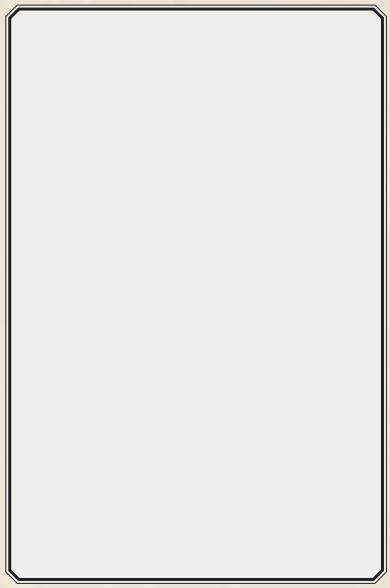
FREE LEAGUE Symbaroum

AGE HEIGHT WEIGHT

APPEARANCE

BACKGROUND

PERSONAL GOAL



FRIENDS & COMPANIONS

NAME	RACE	OCCUPATION	PLAYER
NAME	RACE	OCCUPATION	PLAYER
NAME	RACE	OCCUPATION	PLAYER
NAME	RACE	OCCUPATION	PLAYER
NAME	RACE	OCCUPATION	PLAYER

GROUP NAME

GROUP GOAL

ARTIFACTS & MYSTICAL TREASURES

NAME	POWERS	CORRUPTION
NAME	POWERS	CORRUPTION
NAME	POWERS	CORRUPTION
NAME	POWERS	CORRUPTION

EQUIPMENT

MONEY

OTHER ASSETS

"The game that has inspired me most this year"
- John Dodd, Tabletop Gaming magazine

"The simple system and rich setting, thick with dark and evocative imagery, makes this a worthy consideration for new and experienced gamers alike."
- Paul Baldowski, GeekNative

"Twilight falls. Davokar darkens." *The goblin Fenya sounded calm, despite the flock of violings that swarmed eagerly around them – the nasty birds could predict bloodshed, they all knew that. Kvarek felt the sweat on his palms threaten his grip on the spear and shouted over his shoulder: "Magdala, faster!" The witch didn't answer, lost as she was to the sinister harmonies of the ritual, her hands caressing the pillar's grim stone face.*

A loud rumbling echoed through the ruin, as if some giant creature had awoken and stood up from under layer upon layer of stone and soil. "The witch said that the abominations come out at night," the goblin muttered. Kvarek's knuckles whitened as he tightened the grip: "No, only that they are hungriest after dark. They are not afraid of the evening sun, and not of ..." He was cut short by Magdala's hoarse voice: "The pillar has answered. I know where the mausoleum is."

Then, out of the ruins, the blight beast came at them, massive and roaring. Its claws scraped the rocky ground, scouring out deep sores oozing pure corruption, leaving drops of black, mercury-like mildew on moss and stones in its wake.

"We cannot escape this," said Fenya. Magdala nodded agreement. "Well then," Kvarek sighed, "this is where we make our stand, for the right to the treasures of Symbaroum."

SYMBAROUM INVITES YOU TO JOIN IN THE ADVENTURE! Explore the vast Forest of Davokar in the hunt for treasures, lost wisdoms and fame. Visit the barbarian clans to trade or to plunder their treasuries. Establish a base of power among princes, guilds or rebellious refugees in the capital city of Yndaros. Or survive encounters with Arch Trolls, dark-minded Blight Beasts and undead warlords. But whatever you do, never ignore the warnings spoken by the wardens of the forest: tread carefully and do not disturb the ruins of old, for the dark deep of Davokar is about to awaken.

- A fast-paced and flexible rule-set for creating player characters and acting in the game world.
- 5 playable races and 3 archetypes, divided into 15 occupations, as a basis for character creation.
- 35 abilities, 25 mystical powers, 33 rituals and a large number of weapons and armors to make each character unique.
- Detailed guidelines for how to create adventures; 38 monsters and adversaries, and 19 monstrous traits to arm the characters' enemies with.
- More than 50 pages describing the game world's history, geography and cultures, focusing on four particular settings: the Forest of Davokar, the fortune hunter's town of Thistle Hold, the Ambrian capital Yndaros and the cliff of Karvosti where the barbarian clans convene.
- Symbaroum is a complete roleplaying game; all you need to play is paper, pen and a dice set.
- This roleplaying game is suitable for all adventurous humans, goblins and trolls from the age of 12.

Symbaroum

FREE LEAGUE